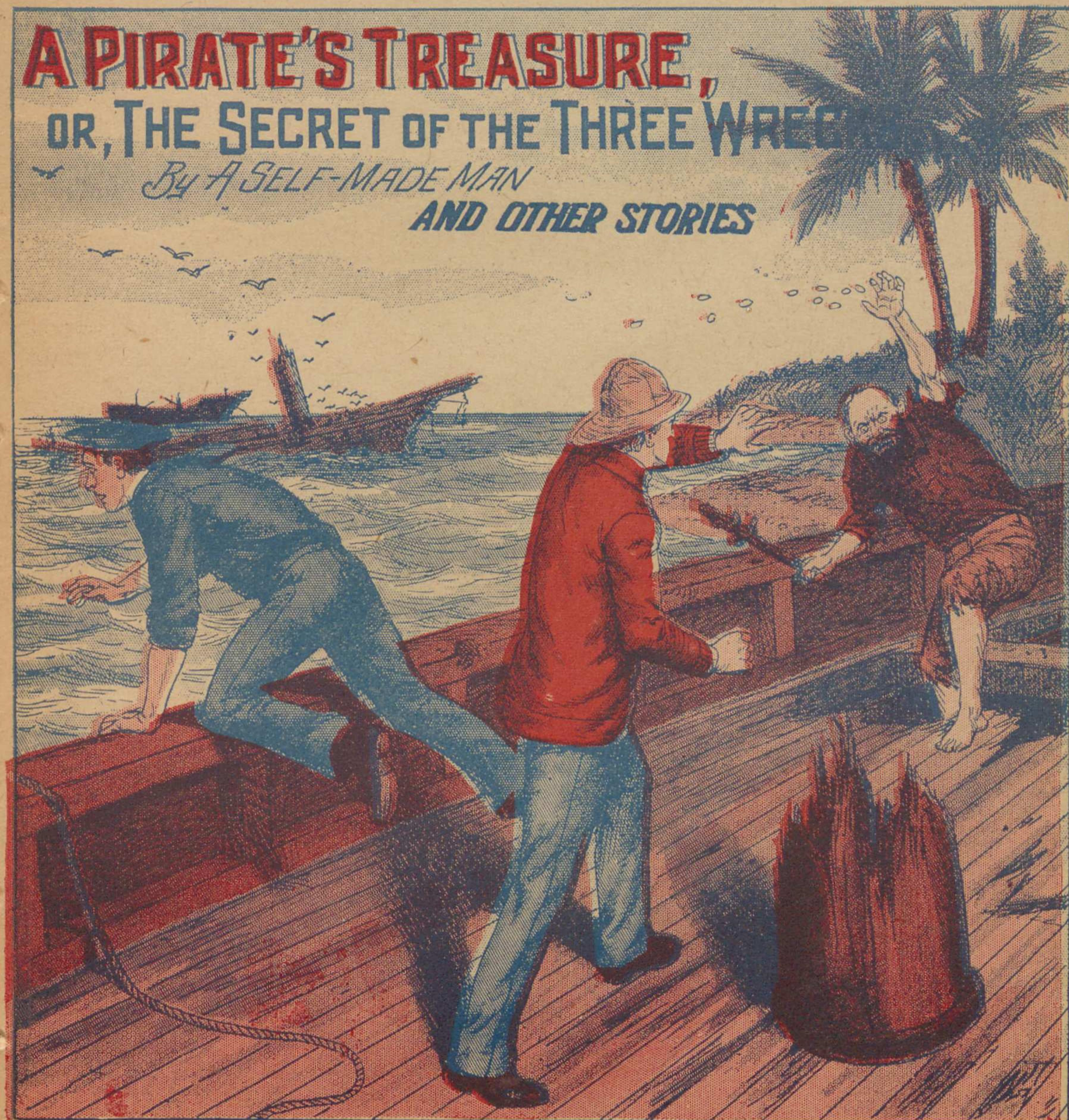


FAME FORTUNE WEEKLY. STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

A PIRATE'S TREASURE, OR, THE SECRET OF THE THREE WRECKS

By A SELF-MADE MAN

AND OTHER STORIES



The crazy man flung a handful of coins at Ned. "Get off this wreck!" he howled. Barney became scared and dove overboard. "I'll tackle him alone," muttered the young castaway, and he rushed at the madman and gripped him by the arms.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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A Pirate's Treasure

OR, THE SECRET OF THE THREE WRECKS

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—A Pair of Rascals.

"This is a fine little place, Barney, this town of San Benito," said Ned Barry, as he and his companion, an Irish lad of about his own age, sat at a small table on the shady porch of a public wine house in a small rambling village of Lower California, facing the Gulf of California, not far from the Port of La Paz.

"Begorra it is; and there are some foine girls here, too, do yez moind," replied Barney.

"You are always thinking of the girls, Barney," laughed Ned.

"True for ye. That's a weakness I have, faith," grinned the other.

"I thought you told me that you had a sweet-heart in 'Frisco?"

"I have—two of them, and I don't know which I like the best."

"Two ought to be plenty, yet here you are casting sheep's eyes at every pretty Mexican girl we run across."

"It's mesilf that can't help that. I nivir could resist the girls."

"It's too bad that our stay will be short at La Paz. The yacht sails for Mazatlan the day after to-morrow. I'd like to hang around this place for a week or two longer," said Ned, in a wistful tone, as his eyes rested on the white-washed walls of a tree-embowered hacienda which stood out clear and distinct in the sunshine on the side of the green hill.

"So yez could get acquainted wid that black-eyed senorita ye followed down here a while ago wid me in your wake," chuckled Barney.

"Do you blame me? She's the loveliest girl I ever saw in my life," replied Ned, enthusiastically.

"Blame yez? Faith I don't. Thim eyes of hers would turn any fellow's head. But what good would it do yez to know her? We've already found out that she's the daughter of that ould Spaniard who lives on the hill yonder. Thim dons are thot proud he'd take it as an insult for a sailor like yoursilf to make up to the daughter of the house. The landlord here says he's as rich as blazes. He owns half of a silver mine in the San Madre Mountains over in Chihuahua, Mexico, and he has a power of acres about his hacienda. Don Jose Cabilero, he calls himself, and he's as stuck up as a paycock. Sure, it's small chance ye have wid his daughter, Senorita Pepita."

Ned thought so himself, though he did not like to admit it. He was no match for the only child and heiress of a proud and wealthy Spaniard, in whose veins ran the blood of a long line of hidalgos. And yet Ned was so badly smitten by the fair girl that he couldn't bear the thought of giving up what bore all the earmarks of a fruitless chase. He was an orphan boy, born on the Pacific Coast, and raised in a Spanish family on a ranch in Santa Clara County, California. An irresistible longing for the sea had caused him to run away from the ranch and ship in a brig bound for the Sandwich Islands. He had learned to be something of a sailor on that trip, but was discharged with the rest of the hands when the brig returned to San Francisco. Thrown on his own resources, with little money, he was glad to secure a berth on a rich broker's yacht bound on a pleasure trip down the coast, her ultimate destination being unknown, who had shipped for the cruise at good wages.

Here he met Barney O'Toole, whose nautical experience was nothing to brag of, and the two boys struck up a warm friendship. After one or two stops since leaving San Francisco, the yacht had put into La Paz for a week's stay, and most of that had already passed. The small crew was allowed unlimited shore leave, but the hands were required to be aboard not later than nine o'clock each night. Ned and Barney always came ashore together and enjoyed themselves in each other's company. This was a great advantage to Barney, who couldn't speak a word of Spanish, while Ned could converse like a native in that language. Two of the crew always remained by turns on the yacht, and that morning Ned and Barney had been obliged to stay aboard until relieved after dinner by two shipmates, who returned for that purpose, according to orders.

The boys had steered at once for a public garden in La Paz, and there Senorita Pepita Cabilero had appeared in all the glory of a brand-new mantilla that became her brunette beauty exceedingly.

Ned was a good-looking, manly boy and the senorita had found that it suited her fancy to engage in a mild flirtation with him at a distance. The young sailor was completely fascinated by her, and when she left the garden with an old duenna who had charge of her, Ned followed, and, of course, Barney went along, too. The girl and her companion mounted a pair of sober

looking mules and trotted out of town. Ned immediately bargained for a ride for himself and companion, on a cart bound in the same direction. The cart landed the boys at the public house in San Benito, where they now were, while the mules carried the señorita and the old woman up the gentle slope to the hacienda already mentioned. Ned proceeded to inquire about the identity of the lovely Spanish girl, and secured the facts stated by Barney, to whom he had told them. The young sailor gazed gloomily toward the hacienda. Somewhere within its precincts that charming girl was moving about, or maybe seated in the portico, or under the shade of a tree.

"Let's take a walk up that way," he said at last.

"Have yez the nerve to call on her?"

"I have the nerve to do most anything the way I feel," replied Ned.

"It's hit hard yez are, I can see; but ye'll get over it once yez are at say again," said Barney, rising to accompany him.

Ned felt kind of diffident about going straight up to the house. In fact, he didn't really think of entering the cactus wall which surrounded the building and which, but for the fact that the hacienda was erected on a slope, would have hidden all but its red adobe roof tiles. He led the way by a roundabout route, and the two boys were soon walking among the semi-tropical trees that plentifully sprinkled the hill.

They left behind them the scattered white-washed houses, nearly all of one-story, ornamented with green blinds, of the village. Finally they struck a sort of lane of trees and thick foliage. They appreciated the shade, for the sun was hot, and there was scarcely any breeze from the gulf. Insects buzzed around them, and brilliant-hued birds flew hither and thither.

"Begorra, it's hot!" said Barney, mopping his face with a red bandanna handkerchief. "Let's sit down a while and cool off."

He pointed to a thick clump of bushes, and though Ned was for pushing on, he consented to halt for a few minutes. Hardly were they seated on a rustic bench when they heard voices and footsteps approaching from the direction of the village. The newcomers soon appeared. One was a small, spare man, dressed in a rather shabby suit of white duck, his closely cropped bullet head covered by a big Panama straw hat. He was smoothly shaven, but he looked old—all of sixty years. His face wore a sly, rascally look, that was a warning to persons having dealings with him. His companion was a swarthy Mexican, dressed in the prevailing habit of the country—a short, loose jacket, which exposed a wide expanse of shirt; a broad and brilliant sash tied around his waist, with the ends hanging free; loose trousers with wide bottoms, sailor style, but slit up the sides nearly to the knees and caught together with braiding, and finally a picturesque sombrero. He wore a short, fierce-looking mustache, that scarcely concealed the sinister expression of his mouth. The word villain seemed to fit him easily. The pair were talking in Spanish, every word of which was Greek to Barney, but perfectly intelligible to Ned.

"Hace mucho calor (it is very hot)," said the Mexican. "Let us stay here a while, Señor Snakeley."

That was agreeable to the little man, who ap-

peared to be an American. He pulled out his handkerchief and, taking off his hat, wiped his forehead.

"You have the assignment of the mine sealed and attested, I believe?" said the Mexican, in his native tongue.

"Si, señor. It is in my pocket," replied Snakeley, whose other name, by the by, was Jacob. "You understand of course it is a forgery."

"Yes—yours. Give it to me," said the Mexican, holding out his hand.

"Pardon me, Señor Bruno, but where is my security that I participate in this scheme of yours? Had we not better—"

"Understand each other? Yes, you are a consummate rascal—don't start, my dear friend—I admit I am another, though of another class. I am a man of purpose and resolution, while you—but no matter. I understand you thoroughly. You will do anything for a price, and I have bought your services. Is it not so, señor?" with a grim and wicked little laugh.

The little man looked annoyed, not insulted.

"The security," he repeated, in a half-anxious, half-fawning tone.

"Have you not my letters as evidence?"

"I would prefer something substantial."

"Fear not; you shall be well paid as soon as I have secured possession of the mine. Do you trust me, Señor Snakeley?"

"But suppose you should fail in this scheme of yours?"

"Fail! Per dios! I shall not fail. I have letters proving that Don Jose lost his claim in the mine to me at play in Chihuahua."

"All forgeries, as you know."

"Thanks to your clever penmanship," chuckled the Mexican. "My friend, we are both in the same boat in this affair, so you will have to trust me."

"Don Jose will deny everything, including the letters."

"I have provided against that. You must think me a fool to take only half measures."

"How?"

"At this moment Don Jose is a prisoner aboard my vessel."

"Indeed! What do you intend to do with him?"

"Keep him until he ratifies the arrangement."

"But will he? I know Don Jose. He is a proud Castillian. He will never yield to your wishes."

"We will see. He is a father, and the welfare of his daughter will plead to more effect than any argument of mine."

"Her welfare is not involved in the mine. She is rich in her own right, for the hacienda and all this property is hers, left to her by her mother, who owned it when she was alive," said Mr. Snakeley.

"I know it, but I intend that I shall enjoy the use of it as her husband."

"Her husband! Why, the girl hates you."

"That shall not worry me, señor. I shall marry her for all that."

"Pardon me, Señor Bruno, if I have my doubts. She, like her father, has a will of her own. You are a clever ras—pardon me! A slip of the tongue."

"Don't apologize, señor," grinned the Mexican. "The word applies to you as well as me—birds."

of a feather, but only in a way. I am a vulture, while you are merely a jackal. Go on."

"I was about to say that you are very clever, but not clever enough to bend a woman against her will."

"You do not know me, senor. I can do anything I set my mind upon."

"You really expect to marry the girl?"

"I not only expect, but intend to do so."

"Then you will perform a miracle."

"I have said her father is in my power. Suppose I make his life the price of her consent? Will she not make any sacrifice to save him?"

"What a head for a rascal—pardon me—you have!"

"It is necessary to think of everything."

"But suppose she proves a match for you?"

"A match for me! What mean you?"

"Suppose she pretends to yield to gain time to go to the authorities at La Paz and arrange for your arrest? Have you thought of that?"

The Mexican grinned as he rolled another cigarette and lighted it.

"Have I not said I have thought of everything?" he said, carelessly.

"How have you provided against that?"

"By giving her no opportunity to do it."

"How will you prevent her? She is not a common girl, I can assure you."

"I have made arrangements for carrying her aboard my vessel to-night."

"The dickens! You dare do that?"

"I have dared to capture her father on his way home, why not her?"

"You are clever—ahem!" cried Mr. Snakeley, regarding the scoundrel with not a little admiration. "Upon my word, Senor Bruno, I believe you are a match for the—you know who I mean."

"El demonio, eh?" grinned the Mexican. "Perhaps. At any rate, I do not fear him. Neither do I require his aid. I depend on no one but myself—and you."

"And you will do the right thing by me, senor, when—when everything is fixed as you wish?"

"You have my word, senor. I never go back on my friends. Once I am in the full possession of the mine, and the Senorita Pepita is my wife, it were an easy matter to settle with you. Come, we will go on."

So the two rascals passed out of sight of the boys, leaving Ned flushed and excited over what he had overheard.

CHAPTER II.—Ned Interviews Senorita Pepita.

"What were they talkin' about?" asked Barney.

"A piece of villainy," answered Ned, with some energy.

"Villainy, is it? Is that a fact? It's not surprised I am, for if ever rascal was written on men's faces it was stamped on theirs. What villainy was they talkin' about? Begorra, it's sorry I am I can't understand the language of this country."

Ned repeated to Barney the substance of the conversation he had listened to.

"Howly smoke! what a pair of scoundrels!" exclaimed the Irish boy. "But we, I mane yourself, can put a spoke in their wheel. This is a fine excuse for yez to introduce yourself to the senor-

ita. Begorra, when you've told her all it's solid ye'll be wid her. It's luck we came up here."

"Very fortunate, indeed. I shall certainly call at the hacienda at once and expose this plot to the young lady. I regret that your ignorance of the language will prevent you from corroborating me, but I guess the senorita will believe me, for doubtless the Mexican has persecuted her with his attention before falling back on his crooked work."

"To be sure he has. I wonder what he does for a livin'? You say he has a vessel of some kind. He must be the skipper of it if he can carry a respectable gentleman like the don aboard and kape him there against his will, not to speake about kidnappin' the senorita herself. His crew must be blackguards like himself. Perhaps he's wan of them pirates I've read about."

"There are not supposed to be pirates in these days. The game is altogether too risky for the money that's in it. However, this Bruno would make a very fine pirate if he dared embark in the business. He has all the qualifications for the trade."

"He looks it. Maybe he does a little on the sly. He wouldn't have a vessel unless he used it for some purpose."

"He probably carries freight up and down the gulf, or elsewhere, and uses that as a cover for any kind of rascality he chooses to indulge in. Well, come on. We'll go on to the hacienda."

They soon came out into an open space, and saw the opening of the cactus grove before them. Ned marched boldly up to it, with Barney at his side. Passing through into a kind of garden, they saw an old peon at work upon some plants. He looked up and favored them with a respectful salutation. The boys returned it and continued on.

A very pretty Mexican domestic or maid was playing with a handsome dog close to the main entrance. She regarded the boys with considerable surprise. Ned addressed her in Spanish, asking for Senorita Pepita.

"The senorita has visitors, senor. You will wait here and I will tell her you wish to see her. Will the senors give me their names?"

"My name is Ned Barry. I am an American. I wish to see the senorita on business of the greatest importance, and will wait till she is disengaged."

The maid disappeared into the portico. While she was gone, Ned tried to make friends with the dog and succeeded pretty well. In a few minutes the girl returned.

"The senorita will be at liberty in a short time. If the young senor will wait she will be pleased to grant him a brief interview," said the girl.

"I'll wait," replied Ned. "My friend thinks you are a very pretty girl."

The maid smiled and cast a goo-goo glance at Barney. The Irish lad raised his sailor hat and bowed. The maid gave him another fascinating look and said something in Spanish.

"What did she say?" asked Barney, nudging Ned.

"She said you are very polite," replied Ned.

"Yez can tell her that's one of me failin's."

At that moment Senor Bruno, the Mexican, made his appearance, followed by Jacob Snakeley. The former looked keenly at the boys as he passed out and took his way toward the open-

ing in the cactus-wall. Mr. Snakeley hardly looked at them. The maid rushed in and was gone some little time.

When she returned she told Ned to follow her, and Ned signed to Barney to fall in behind him. They were taken into the portico, or open interior quadrangle of the house. Here they found the black-eyed beauty, in company with her duenna, waiting to receive them. The senorita favored Ned with a sweeping glance from her glorious eyes that almost made the boy forget the nature of his errand. There was a manifest reserve in her attitude, and a slight hauteur in the bow she gave the boys, as if she suspected that their visit was a nervy attempt on their part to make her acquaintance. Although favorably disposed toward Ned, she was prepared to let him understand that Spanish etiquette did not permit of impromptu introductions.

"Senorita, you will pardon this intrusion," said Ned, with a bow, "but I have a very important communication for your ears."

"Indeed, Senor Eduardo Barry," replied the girl, waving her arm toward seats, and clearly surprised by the boy's command of the Spanish language. "Are you not an Americano?"

"I am, senorita, but I was raised in a Spanish family in California and I can talk your language as well as my own," smiled Ned.

"You certainly speak it exceedingly well," she answered, in a more friendly way, "but may I ask what this important communication is?"

Ned could see that she doubted its importance.

"It has direct connection with one of your recent visitors, Senor Bruno."

"Ah!" exclaimed the senorita, in a tone of surprise, accompanied with a frown. "I was not aware that you know Senor Bruno."

"I don't know him, senorita, and I don't want to know him. He is a scoundrel, and it is to warn you against him that brought me here," replied Ned, earnestly.

The beauty looked startled. "Warn me, senor? What do you mean?"

"Will you permit me to tell you what I overheard between him and his companion, a man named Snakeley?"

The senorita bowed, with a disturbed look. Nat then proceeded to tell her how he and his friend Barney had taken the liberty of intruding themselves on her property to look around, as they were strangers in that neighborhood. Then he went on to tell how they had taken shelter from the heat in a certain spot, which he described, and how, while there, the Mexican and Snakeley had come along and stopped within earshot of them. As near as he could remember he repeated the conversation which had taken place between the men.

"What!" cried the senorita, interrupting him. "My father has lost his mine at play with that man—impossible!"

There was a flash of indignant denial in her eyes as she spoke.

"You are right, senorita. The letters showing that he did, and which Senor Bruno has in his possession, were forged by Snakeley, as is the alleged assignment of the mine by your father," said Ned.

"The rascal!" cried the girl, impetuously. "This, then, is what he meant when he told me he would ruin my father unless I—"

She stopped in sudden confusion as if aware she was saying too much.

"Senor, I expect my father home at any moment. You will repeat to him what you have just told me, will you not?"

"I should be glad to, but I fear your father will not come home—soon."

"Not come home soon!" she exclaimed, in a startled way. "Why—"

"Because, pardon me for giving you a shock, I heard Senor Bruno say he had captured your father on the way to his hacienda, and now holds him a prisoner aboard his vessel," continued Ned.

Senorita Pepita sprang on her feet, with a startled cry. A look of distress and fear shone in her eyes.

"Oh, senor, you do not, cannot mean that!" she exclaimed.

"I'm afraid it is only too true, for that rascal looks capable of any villainy. At any rate, he declared the fact to Snakeley."

"Madre de dios!" gasped the girl, her face going white. "What shall I do?"

"Do!" cried Ned. "Have the scoundrel arrested at once, with his side-partner, Snakeley."

"You have told me the truth?" she cried, starting forward and seizing him by the hand.

"On my word of honor, senorita. Do you doubt me?"

"No, no! and yet this news is so—oh, heaven, my father! If he is in the power of that man I shall be forced to—"

She covered her face with her hands.

"Don't give way to grief, senorita, but take action to secure your father's escape. The authorities of La Paz will surely help you out."

"Yes, yes, I will go there and see the Governor. But you must come with me to tell what you know."

"I am entirely at your service, Senorita Cabilero, but I have not told you all."

"Ah! There is more?" she cried, breathlessly.

"Yes, but it concerns yourself."

"Me!"

"Yes. Senor Bruno told Snakeley that he intended to force you to marry him."

"Never!" flashed the girl. "Never will I marry him!"

"He says he will make your father's life the price of your consent."

"What! He said that?" cried the almost frantic girl.

"He did. And, furthermore, to prevent you from blocking his plans he intends to capture you to-night and carry you aboard of his vessel."

The girl clasped her hands in terror.

"This he would probably have carried out but for the fortunate fact that his rascality was discovered by me," said Ned. "I have thus been able to warn you of your own danger as well as of your father's unfortunate position."

"Oh, Senor Barry, how shall I thank you? You are a brave, noble Americano. You have earned my gratitude and that of my father. We shall never forget the service you have rendered us. I will get ready at once to go to La Paz with you and your friend. I will take two trusty servants with us. The Senora Cabanes," nodding toward the duenna, "will, of course, accompany me, for I never go abroad alone."

She turned and spoke rapidly to the woman, who rose at once and nodded acquiescence.

"I shall order refreshments, senor, for you and your friend, while we are preparing. Make yourselves at home. This is my house, and you are most welcome to my hospitality."

She seized both of Ned's hands, impulsively, and carried them to her lips. Then she called her maid and gave her hurried orders. After that she withdrew with the duenna. Inside of five minutes a servant entered with fruit and sweet cakes, and the maid accompanied the peon with a flagon of light wine and glasses.

"Help yourself Barney. Don't be bashful," said Ned, when they were alone.

"Don't say a word, Ned. It's meself will do justice to the layout. Begorra, what we had at the wine shop isn't a patch on this lunch," said Barney, making quite free with the refreshments. They ate with an appetite, for the fruit was of a fine variety, and the cakes extremely palatable.

"Ah, it's a swate tooth I have," said Barney, as he munched the cake. "Faith, it would be a pity to let any of these go to waste."

"No fear of that from the way you are getting away with them," laughed Ned.

"Faith, I wish that maid had remained to kape us in countenance," said Barney. "She's a swate little colleen, so she is. She's almost as good-lookin' as her mistress. It's a pity she can't understand English."

"For your especial benefit, eh?"

Before Barney could reply, Senorita Pepita and her elderly companion entered the portico. Her Mexican maid appeared as if by magic from an opposite door. It is quite probable she had been standing behind a portiere, watching the boys.

"Come," said the senorita to Ned, "the mules and attendants are awaiting us outside. It is necessary that we lose no time."

"We are ready to accompany you, Senorita Pepita," he replied.

The party filed out into the open space between the building and the garden. Half a dozen sleek-looking mules were standing there, in charge of several peons. Two of the latter appeared to be equipped for the trip to La Paz. The party mounted and started down the broad walk toward the opening in the cactus wall. They had almost reached it when suddenly their way was blocked by a number of rough-looking Mexican sailors, led by Senor Bruno.

CHAPTER III.—Ned's Defense of Pepita.

"Ha!" the rascal exclaimed, with a look of surprise. "Whither bound, Senorita Cabilero?"

"That is a matter that need not concern you, senor," replied the girl, coldly.

"But it does concern me," replied the Mexican, very brusquely.

"What do you mean?" said the senorita, with a shade of fear in her tones. "Why have you intruded here with those rough men?"

"Because I am here to escort you to my vessel."

"Your vessel, senor? Are you mad, that you talk that way?"

"Your father is now aboard my schooner. We have a little business to transact, and your presence is necessary to give weight to it."

The senorita gave Ned a quick, appealing look,

as if she looked to him to help her in this emergency.

Ned saw the look, and if he needed a spur to stand up for the lovely girl that glance would have been enough to fire his soul in her cause.

Senor Bruno noted the look she cast at the boy and his lip curled.

"Come, senorita," he said, impatiently, advancing toward her mule, "we are wasting time."

"I will not go with you. I want nothing to do with you. You are a wicked man. You have made my father a prisoner to suit your base purposes. But you shall not succeed. No, no! heaven has warned me in time and disclosed the plot you have woven to force me to marry you. You are a villain, and I scorn your false protestations of love as I scorn the friendship you have pretended for my father!" cried the girl, excitedly.

"Ha! what mean you, senorita? Who has been filling your ears with lies against me?" exclaimed the Mexican, clearly much taken aback by her words.

He flashed a glance of suspicion at the two boys.

"It is the truth I have learned, Senor Bruno. Your own words confirm a part when you say my father is on board of your vessel. You captured him on his way home from El Madre range; but you shall suffer for it. The Governor—"

"Ha! I see the purpose of this cavalcade!" cried the Mexican, almost savagely. "You are bound for La Paz, to take action against me. It is fortunate I have come in time to head you off. We will put an end to this. I shall take you at once to my vessel, senorita, where I trust we shall arrange everything amicably."

"You will do nothing of the kind, Senor Bruno," said Ned, who had dismounted, interposing between the rascal and his prize.

"Caramba! Who are you?" cried the Mexican, angrily.

"I am an American, and I throw the protection of the American flag around Senorita Pepita. Touch her at your peril!" answered Ned, resolutely.

The Spanish girl flashed a look of gratitude and admiration on the bold lad. He had suddenly become a hero—the hero she had always dreamed of—in her eyes.

How brave and handsome he looked as he faced her enemy!

Such were her thoughts, and her breast heaved with excitement.

"An Americano, eh?" sneered the scoundrel. "A Gringo, bah! I care nothing for you or your flag. Stand aside, or—"

"Or what?" cried Ned, looking him full in the face.

There is a power in the human eye when backed by an indomitable spirit, and that power made itself felt on the Mexican, though he was no coward. Senor Bruno folded his arms and flashed a fierce look on the boy.

"Boy, you are either mad or a fool to dare attempt to balk me. I could crush you with a blow. You are nothing to me, therefore, stand aside. I have no quarrel with you, but by heaven if you persist in your interference you shall regret it!"

"I know you to be a scoundrel, Senor Bruno, and I am not afraid of you. I shall defend this girl with my life, if needs be."

"What is this girl to you?"

"What is that to you? It is enough for me to know that she looks to me for help in this emergency. No true American would shirk such an appeal."

"Bah! You talk like you were on the stage. I will teach you a lesson, mi amigo. Here, Pedro and Mendez—seize that young braggart and take him aboard my vessel. He shall be trussed up and treated to twenty lashes that he may learn to behave himself!" ordered the Mexican.

Paying no further attention to the boy, Senor Bruno advanced to grab the bridle of the senorita's mule. Realizing that matters had come to a climax, Ned stepped back and smashed the senor in the jaw with all his power, felling him to the ground.

"Retreat to the house, Senorita Pepita," he said. "I will hold them off with the aid of my companion, and you can send help to me."

He called to Barney, who had dismounted the moment he saw that trouble threatened his friend. When Ned felled Senor Bruno to the ground the six sailors uttered cries of mingled consternation and anger. They drew their knives to a man and began to advance. The Mexican skipper rose from the ground, white with fury.

"Cut the Gringo down!" he roared, drawing his own knife.

The boys would surely have been sacrificed but for the intrepidity of the girl, who urged her mule in between them and the threatening array of steel.

"You shall not harm him, Senor Bruno!" she cried. "He is a brave boy and I will not have him touched. Do you understand?"

"He shall die!" hissed the Mexican. "He struck me—me, Diego Bruno. Shall I put up with a blow? Caramba—no!"

Senorita Pepita reached forward and caught his uplifted arm with one hand, while from some hidden recess in her gown she flashed out a gleaming stiletto.

"Order your men back, or I will bury this in your neck!" she cried, with flashing eyes.

At that moment a dozen peons, armed with farm implements, came rushing on the scene to defend their young mistress. Bruno uttered an ugly laugh. With his left hand he grabbed the senorita's wrist, and then tore his other arm free.

"I have you now, senorita!"

The girl uttered a scream.

Ned flung himself on the rascal and tried to push him away. With an imprecation, Bruno attempted a downward sweep of his knife. Barney was on the spot and caught his wrist with both hands, wrenching it so that the weapon fell ringing on the ground. The Mexican uttered a string of rapid commands to his sailors. They rushed in upon the advancing peons and a fight ensued between the two forces. Both parties had their hands full, while matters were growing exceedingly awkward for the rascally skipper, now disarmed and beset by both boys. He was a powerful ruffian, though, as well as an active one. And he was very dangerous when aroused. Flinging Ned and Barney back, he seized the girl and dragged her from her animal, as if she were but a feather.

Barney snatched up the Mexican's knife and followed Ned in a fresh attack on the villain as he was backing toward the opening in the cactus wall. Finding himself in a desperate situation,

the skipper shouted to his men to close around him and hold off the boys. They tried to obey orders, though fiercely beset by the peons. At that moment another man suddenly appeared at the entrance. He was a swarthy-looking scoundrel of large build.

He took in the situation at a glance and sprang forward.

"Ha, Sanchez!" cried Bruno. "You are in time. Secure those boys and see that they are carried aboard the schooner. By all that's holy they shall pay for this trouble they have given me!"

Sanchez, who was the rascal's chief officer on his vessel, and a fierce ruffian, got in action at once. He was a host in himself, and his very appearance cowed the peons who threatened the sailors. Ned and Barney were caught, one in each hand, by Sanchez, and swung away from Senor Bruno, leaving that rascal free with Senorita Pepita in his arms. The girl was powerless in his grasp.

Her screams as he carried her to the gate where he had a mule in readiness to bear her off, made Ned wild with anger, but neither he nor Barney could do a thing more in her behalf. Sanchez turned them over to a couple of the crew, and then he darted at the peons with his knife ready for mischief.

Backed up as he was by the other four men, two of whom were slightly wounded, and all the more dangerous on that account, the peons broke and scattered over the garden. Sanchez, who seemed to understand what was expected of him, called a halt in the attack and led an orderly retreat to the entrance. The two boys had been bound with scarfs, and Pepita gagged with a handkerchief. Senor Bruno ordered a roundabout retreat to the little cove where he had a long boat in waiting, left in charge of a single sailor.

Ned and Barney were pushed along without regard to their feelings, while Pepita was carried, a helpless burden, on the mule. In this way, surrounded by the eight rascals, the party, avoiding contact with the houses of the village, reached the waterside. The prisoners were handed into the boat, the senorita carefully, the boys roughly, and the crew, taking to their oars, shoved off and headed for a long, low rakish-looking schooner that resembled a pirate craft of other days.

CHAPTER IV.—On Board the Schooner.

The boys were not in a position to hold any communication with each other as a couple of the sailors sat between them, so they had to grin and bear their hard luck as best they could. The sun was slowly setting behind the hill on which the hacienda stood, and before long darkness would be over the landscape. The boat, propelled by the sturdy rowers, rapidly approached the schooner, which was anchored only a short distance off shore. As the boys faced the stern of the boat they could catch a glimpse, now and then, over the shoulders of the rowers, of Senorita Pepita, where she sat on the seat beside Senor Bruno, partly supported by one of his arms, while he steered with the other.

It made Ned almost desperate to see how unhappy she looked and to realize that she, like

her father, was in the power of an unscrupulous rascal who had shown his hand at last.

If he and Barney had failed to save her, even with the backing of her own servants, from a part of the scoundrel's crew, and within her own gates, as it were, it did not seem probable that they would be able to do anything for her on board Senor Bruno's schooner, where that villain had full sway.

It seemed probable that he, at least, would be severely dealt with not only for his plucky stand in the girl's defence, but for striking down the Mexican. The ruffian might even put him to death in order to get full satisfaction. However, he wasted little of his thoughts on himself. He was far more interested in Pepita's fate. That she might be compelled to marry the scoundrel was abhorrent to him, for he did not attempt to hide the fact from himself that he loved her with all his heart, though even under ordinary circumstances he did not figure that he stood any chance of winning her. His reflections were brought to an end by the boat reaching the schooner.

"Up with you!" cried Sanchez, glaring at the two boys.

They were assisted aboard by a shove from a sailor. Sanchez was on deck as quick as they. He had evidently received his instructions with respect to them, for grabbing them each by the arm he forced them over to an open hatchway and ordered them to jump down.

As they were slow about taking the leap into the dark void below, not knowing what they might fetch up against, he uttered an imprecation and tumbled them in, bodily, not seeming to care whether they broke their necks or not.

They fell about a dozen feet and landed on a bunch of sailcloth, which broke their fall. Just the same, they were pretty badly shaken up and lay two or three minutes without moving. Then Ned sat up.

"Are you hurt, Barney?" he asked his companion.

"Faith, I dunno. Me neck is twisted a bit."

"This is a rough deal we're up against."

"Yez may well say that. The senor has a tough gang around him. If they're not pirates, faith they're nixt door to it. Sure, them chaps have the word cutthroat written all over their faces."

"We are likely to fare pretty bad before they let us go. At any rate, I am, for that villain Bruno has it in for me."

"Yez didn't do more than your juty to stand up for the senorita. If she doesn't fall in love wid yez for that she's mighty small pertaties."

"And if she did, what good would that do either of us? The senor has marked her for his own, and the family wealth for his plunder. He holds a full hand in the game at present, and unless something out of the common turns up it looks as if he'll win. While I feel sorry for myself, I feel more sorry for her."

"Do yez hear that windlass for'ard? They're gettin' up the anchor. We'll niver be able to report aboard the yacht this night."

"We'll be lucky if we ever see her again," said Ned, gloomily.

"Don't say that. I don't want to lose such a foine berth."

"You know the yacht sails the day after to-

morrow. If we are carried off in this craft she'll have to leave without us."

"Sure, we can join her in Mazatlan, for she's bound there."

"I may be among the angels by that time."

"Why do you say that? Sure, you don't think them ruffians above are goin' to put us out of the way, do yez?" asked Barney, anxiously.

"It's hard to tell what they'll do if the skipper takes it into his head that dead boys tell no tales."

"But yez said there wasn't any more pirates, and only pirates would dare to make away with prisoners."

"The senor seems to be as villainous a man as ever walked a pirate deck, and being a Mexican, he isn't to be trusted. I am not casting any reflection on the Mexicans as a nation, but on individuals of the Bruno stamp."

"Of course, I know what yez mane. He's a bad egg, and it's hoping I am that we'll be able to escape from his clutches."

While talking the boys had easily released themselves from the scarves with which their arms had been bound, but for all that their prospects were not much improved.

There was no way of clambering out of the hold, so all they could do was to stay where they were and trust to luck. They heard the sailors hoist the sails, and the motion of the vessel soon told them she was under way.

It grew dark rapidly, and soon they could see nothing but the patch of starlit sky framed in the open hatch. Time passed and no one came near them.

The crew had their supper, and some of them turned in, but not the slightest attention was paid to the two prisoners in the hold. The wind was light, yet the schooner made good progress over the waters of La Paz Bay, for she was a swift sailer. The boys had no idea what direction she was going, but, as a matter of fact, she was headed south.

La Paz was passed, the schooner rounded the Island of Espirito Santo, and then headed well out into the gulf. The late lunch the boys had enjoyed at the hacienda prevented them from feeling particularly hungry, and that was a blessing, for they were to get nothing to eat that night.

Long before midnight came around the heat of the hold, even ventilated as it was by the open hatch, sent the boys into the land of dreams, and they slept without interruption till the sun was well up, and they were aroused by somebody shaking them roughly by the shoulders.

"Wake up!" cried a voice, in Spanish, and opening their eyes they beheld the villainous-looking Sanchez gazing down at them. "Follow me on deck," he added.

He started up a rope ladder which had been let down into the hold.

"What did he say?" asked Barney.

"We are ordered on deck. Follow me up the ladder," replied Ned.

Sanchez awaited their coming and marched them forward to the galley or cook-house, around which the crew, or at least most of them, were squatted, eating their breakfast. The moment the boys struck the deck they saw, to their surprise, that the vessel was out of sight of land. Sanchez brought them to the galley door and ordered the Mexican cook to serve them out of

the same provender that the sailors had. It was far from being on a par with what they got on board the yacht, where everybody was well-fed in American style.

The crew of the schooner was not well fed, and the fare was pretty rocky.

"Begorra, this is a fierce lay-out, so it is!" growled Barney.

"It's all you'll get," said Ned, "so unless you want to go hungry you better eat what's been handed to you."

They didn't eat very heartily, but managed to take the edge off their hunger. They were then marched aft, where Bruno was pacing up and down near the wheel. He was in a pretty good humor, for things seemed to be coming his way. A scowl, however, settled over his face when the boys were brought before him. This scowl grew darker when he looked at Ned. He remembered the blow the boy had given him, and that was something he could not forgive. He had already marked the boy for a quick exit into the next world, though he had not decided on the fate of Barney.

"What's your name, Americano, and where do you hail from?" he asked Ned, in Spanish.

"My name is Ned Barry, and I hail from the yacht Sea Nymph, now lying at La Paz," replied our hero.

"And your companion also belongs to the yacht?"

"He does."

"What brought you to the Cabilero hacienda yesterday afternoon?"

"Our business there need not concern you, Senor Bruno."

"Answer my question!" cried Bruno, fiercely.

"Well, if you want to know the truth, I went there to warn Senorita Pepita against you," replied Ned, coolly.

"Warn her against me! What can you know about me?"

"Enough to prove that you are a rascal."

"Indeed!" sneered the Mexican. "You will tell me what you told her?"

"I decline to satisfy your curiosity."

"Caramba! Do you not see that your life is in my hands? I am the captain of this schooner. I can order you strung up to the end of the gaff and my men will obey."

"I can die but once and I have no doubt you have the power to execute your threat; but I do not fear you for all that."

Bruno seemed a bit disconcerted by the boy's coolness. He saw that the lad was really brave, and not to be intimidated. He was anxious to find out if Ned had given the senorita the information about her father's capture. If he had, he wanted to know how he had come in possession of the fact. As Don Jose had been nabbed on a lonely road he was following with a single peon for a companion, and afterward conveyed to the vessel in the darkness, the Mexican could not understand how this boy, or any other outsider had learned about it. Men of his stamp, when confronted with a problem of that kind, always suspect a traitor in camp. Bruno feared that one of his men had gone back on him. If that were the case it was very necessary to spot the fellow so he could make an example of him before the crew. The Mexican intended to put

both boys out of the way, as their knowledge of his character and actions rendered them dangerous to him. He was aware that he and his schooner were already under grave suspicion, and that the authorities of various towns on the coast were anxious to get hold of the evidence that would warrant his arrest and conviction. If the boys were allowed to go after what they had witnessed they would be able to make a lot of trouble for him. It behooved him, therefore, to see that their mouths were sewed up. There were many ways by which he could get rid of them, and he had not decided which way he would adopt. First he must learn what this plucky boy had told the senorita and how he had come by the information.

"Are you tired of life?" he asked Ned, with a frown.

"No."

"Then why take chances with me? I wish to know what you told the girl, and how you came by the information. Tell me, without reserve, and I promise you your life, which I intended to take for the blow you gave me."

"What does your promise amount to?"

The rascal bit his lip for in his heart he knew he did not intend to keep his word with the lad.

"You fear to trust me, eh?"

"Well, you're not a man that invites confidences."

"I swear by all the saints not to harm you if you speak."

"You have very little respect for the saints or heaven itself, to judge from your actions."

"You do not know me, young senor. If I promise you your life I will keep my word."

Ned saw that the rascal was very anxious to learn certain facts, and he believed he would be safer in keeping them to himself. It was a sensible resolution, for Bruno would have had no further use for him once he had learned just what the boy knew. Accordingly, he refused to make any disclosure.

"Take them away and tie them up in the hold," ordered the disappointed and angry skipper.

Sanchez grabbed them each by an arm, and led them back to the hatchway. He told them to descend by the rope ladder. They obeyed, knowing that if they didn't they would be tossed down. Sanchez and a member of the crew followed them down with some rope. The boys were tied to posts, facing each other, in a dark part of the hold, forward, and then left to enjoy themselves as best they could.

CHAPTER V.—The Island in the Socorro Group.

The schooner was bound for one of the islands of the Socorro group, situated about 400 miles off the Mexican coast. There were three large islands in this bunch and several smaller ones. Bruno had established his headquarters on one of them. Here he felt safe from observation and interference. The small island he had taken possession of was uninhabited, and for the most part rocky. A big cavern opened on the sea on the western side, and this connected with several smaller ones where the sun never penetrated. They slipped down into the rocky backbone of

the island, and some of them were entirely below the level of the ocean. When the boys were taken back into the hold the schooner had already covered half the distance to the island.

"We're up against it for fair, Barney," said Ned.

"Sure we are. That was an unlucky trip we took to San Benito. It isn't the first time a woman has led a man into trouble."

"Don't blame the senorita, Barney; it wasn't her fault. Blame me, for I insisted on following her," said Ned.

"If she hadn't flirted with yez at the garden maybe yez wouldn't have chased after her. Thim Spanish girls are full of tricks of old Mother Eve."

"Pepita is an angel. I'll swear she's the finest girl in the world. She saved our lives when she drew her stiletto and forced her mule between us and Bruno's rascally men when they first advanced on us with their knives."

"Begorra that was plucky on her part. Faith, she's no coward, that's plain."

"I should say not. Bruno would never be able to force her into marriage with him if he had to take his chances with her alone. It is evident he realized that fact and so captured her father, believing that the girl's love for her parent could be used to sway her decision. What a scoundrel he is!"

"I wonder where the old ruffian is takin' his schooner to? We're sailin' west, and are out of sight of the Mexican coast."

"I haven't any idea. There are some islands off this way. He may be leading for them."

"Islands is it? And what would he be doin' on an island?"

"I'm not a mind-reader, Barney, so I can't tell you. He knows his own business. He isn't sailing out into the broad Pacific for fun."

"Maybe he intends to lave you and me, like a pair of Robinson Crusoes, on wan of thim islands. It's a good way to get rid of us widout killin' us outright."

"He isn't the man to take all that trouble to get us off his hands. It would be much simpler for him to tie a shot around our feet and dump us overboard. No, he has some other object in view, and it doubtless is connected with the senorita and her father. Probably he was afraid to go to extremes with them within the jurisdiction of the Mexican government. By carrying them some distance from the country he anticipates that they will feel more wholly in his power."

"It's mighty unpleasant to be tied up like this, do yez know?" said Barney. "Suppose a fly was to step on me nose, how would I rach him?"

"Don't worry. There are no flies here."

"The more power to them for kapin' away. Do yez think they'll kape us tied till they rach the island?"

"I'm afraid they will, and afterward, too."

"Thin may the old Harry get every wan of thim whin their toime comes, and it's hopin' that toime will be soon," said Barney, dolorously.

"I dare say the skipper of the yacht is wondering what has become of us," said Ned, presently.

"I suppose he'll have the rist of the crew lukin' for us."

"Very likely. It isn't natural to suppose that we'd run away from such good berths, in a for-

sign port, so he'll conclude something has happened to us."

"Faith, he won't be wrong if he thinks that. Somethin' has happened to us."

"He'll never dream that we went to San Benito. But come to think of it, the news of the senorita's abduction will be likely to reach La Paz, and then the fact will come out that a couple of young sailors, who tried to save her, were carried off with her. That will show what has become of us."

"But it won't do us any good. If the police start to hunt for this schooner they won't find the laste trace of her. How could they, whin she's away out on the say?"

Morning wore slowly away to the boys, and the vessel continued to increase her distance from the Mexican coast. There was a piping breeze and she reeled off a good sixteen knots an hour.

Dinner was served to the crew at noon, and between that and one o'clock one of the sailors brought the boys their mess. He untied their arms so they could eat, and when they finished he tied them to the posts again. Ned asked him where the schooner was bounrd, but the man refused to gratify his curiosity. During the afternoon Sanchez came down and asked Ned if he was ready to tell the skipper what he wanted to know.

"No; he'll find out nothing from me," replied the boy.

"If you don't tell him you'll be tossed overboard to the sharks," said Sanchez, with an evil look in his wicked eyes.

"He might do that anyway after learning what he wants to know."

"No; did he not swear he would not harm you if you told all?"

"Yes, but his oath amounts to nothing. I would as soon trust a snake as him."

"Then you refuse to give him the information he wants?"

"I do."

"You will regret it."

"Perhaps I will, but I have no faith in your skipper. I am satisfied that if he intends to kill me he will do it anyway, whether I tell him what he wishes to know or not."

Sanchez grinned, malevolently.

"We shall reach an island to-night where means will be found to bring you to your senses. You will be put in the Death Cave alone and left to your fate unless you speak. If the horrors of that place will not break your silence nothing will. Adios for the present, young senor," and Sanchez left the hold.

When he was gone, Ned repeated to Barney all that had passed between them.

"So we'll reach an island to-night?" said Barney. "Sure, it's afeard I am we'll be left there whin the schooner laves. If the place is uninhabited, as I suppose it is, we may starve before any vessel puts in and takes us off."

"No such luck as rescue for me, whatever chance you may have. I'm to be put in a place called the Death Cave and left there to perish," said Ned.

"The Death Cave! Oh, wurra! did he mane yez was to be killed?"

"Probably I'll be brought face to face with some lingering death, like starvation."

"Hadn't yez better tell him what he's so anxious to find out?"

"I would if I thought it would save my life, but it's my opinion my compliance would make no difference. Bruno intends to have revenge on me for the knock-down I gave him, though he might pretend differently."

"And if they kill yez what will they do wid me, I dunno?" asked Barney, anxiously.

"It's hard to say. You'll have to take your chances. At any rate, they'll be better than mine."

The prospect ahead of the boys was certainly as dark as could well be imagined, and once more Barney bewailed the fact that they had gone to San Benito.

"I would like to know how Pepita is faring," said Ned, after a pause, "but I suppose nothing will happen to her and her father till we reach the island. Whatever Bruno's plans are with respect to her will doubtless be consummated at that place. He is a crafty scoundrel, and will probably play her father's life against her, though whether he would dare sacrifice the don should she defy him to do his worst is a question. At any rate, he believes the old man is his winning card."

Barney was more interested in his own fate than in the girl's, and so Ned did not find him a very sympathetic listener. Supper-time came around in due course and the boys got their share.

The sailor who brought the food to them released them from the posts, and then returned to the deck, hauling up the rope ladder after him. After eating a portion of the food, the boys walked about the unoccupied part of the hold to stretch their limbs. Then they lay down on the canvas sail under the open hatch, where the air was purer than elsewhere down there, and gazed up at the starry heaven.

The island the schooner was steering for was only twenty miles away at that moment, but, of course, the lads did not know that. While they thought, with gloomy forebodings, of what the morrow would bring forth, neither dreamed that Fate, though apparently serving them a hard rub, was in reality leading them on to the most fortunate period in their young lives.

The rhythmic roll and pitch of the schooner put them to sleep at last, and while they slept the vessel reached the western end of the island and came to anchor close inshore. No attempt was made by the skipper to land during the hours of darkness. He and Sanchez remained in the cabin, playing cards together, drinking and smoking cigarettes. Only an anchor watch of one man remained on duty on deck, the rest of the crew having been allowed to turn in for the night. Senorita Pepita and her father were in their staterooms, where they had stayed most of the time since they were brought on board. Whether they were asleep or not the rascally skipper and mate did not know, nor did they care.

Bruno was in good humor, for he expected to coerce the girl next day into an agreement to marry him, while he also intended to settle the fate of the two boys. Sanchez was in excellent humor, too, for Bruno had promised to give him the schooner as soon as he and Pepita were married, and he had established himself as the master of the hacienda.

The mate would thus step into the skipper's

shoes and become captain of the craft, and at liberty to use her for any purpose that suited him.

This was the summit of his long-cherished ambition. Bruno and his associate in rascality played steadily on till midnight, and then they, too, retired to their rooms and turned in. And thus with only one man awake aboard, the schooner rode at her anchor, like a thoroughly honest trader.

CHAPTER VI.—The Death Cave.

The crew of the schooner was astir early, and their first duty was to wash down the deck. By the time this duty was completed and the planks dry, breakfast was ready for them. Sanchez ordered Ned and Barney to be brought up out of the hold. When the boys reached the deck and looked around they saw the island lying within a hundred feet of the vessel. The opening of the larger outer cavern stared them in the face, like the mouth of a gigantic horn. Its floor sloped outward, and at high tide the water laved about its entrance. At other times a good patch of beach intervened. The boys breakfasted with the sailors, and then, instead of being returned to the hold, were tied up, back to back, against the forward mast.

Breakfast was served in the cabin at eight o'clock, where Bruno and Sanchez partook of it together, Pepita and her father being served in their rooms. After the meal the two chief rascals appeared on deck. A small boat was ordered lowered. Ned was released from the mast, his arms were bound behind his back and he was directed to get into the boat.

He hesitated, for he believed he was going to his doom. Sanchez gave him a shove and tumbled him in with little ceremony. Skipper and mate then put off for the island, Sanchez doing the rowing, which only amounted to a few strokes. As soon as the boat's nose grated on the shingle the mate sprang out and tied the painter around a rock.

"Now, Senor Americano, get out!" he said, sharply.

Ned, feeling that opposition was useless, obeyed.

Bruno stepped out last, and there was a wicked look in his face when he told Ned to follow him, Sanchez bringing up in the rear with a small coil of rope on his arm, a shovel in one hand and a lighted lantern in the other. The three entered the big cavern in single file, and the skipper led the way to a dark opening in one corner, which proved to be the entrance to an underground passage.

"They are taking me to the Death Cave," thought Ned, with a sinking of the heart. "I never will see Barney or Pepita any more."

He would have put up a desperate resistance if he had been able to use his arms, but it was just as well his bonds prevented him from doing it, since he would have stood no show against the herculean Sanchez, who was strong enough to handle any three or four men aboard. And so they entered the passage, and daylight vanished from the boy's sight.

He wondered, as he walked along in the dark between the two men, if he ever would see the

sunshine again. The passage was a short one, and terminated in a small inner cave. This cave sloped downward and looked weird and gloomy in the lantern light. Bruno walked straight across it and entered a second passage, which sloped in the same direction as the cave, leading into the depths of the island.

Like a criminal going to midnight execution, Ned's unwilling feet kept pace with the tramp of the two rascals. A few yards ahead and another cave, similar to the last one, was reached. No pause was made here, the party entering a very narrow passage, pointing downward, their arms brushing its rough sides as they passed through it. This passage was a long one, and carried them below the level of the ocean, even at low tide.

But it had an end, like the other two, terminating in a small, rock-ribbed chamber, which had no other outlet. This was evidently their destination, and Ned shuddered at the thought of being immured in such a place. The slope of the floor was so sharp that the opposite side of the cave was fully six feet lower than the narrow platform around the opening of the passage. Sanchez held the lantern high above his head so as to illumine the place. Attached to the wall at the lowest side was a big iron ring. To Ned's horrified surprise, two skeletons dangled from it, one clothed in the remains of a sailor's rig, the other in female habiliments.

"How do you like the Death Cave, Senor Americano?" asked Bruno, wickedly.

"Now will you tell me what you told the senorita about me, and how the information came into your possession?" continued the skipper.

"No. You have brought me here to do away with me, and nothing that I might tell you would do me any good," replied Ned, huskily.

"By all above, I swear you shall return to the daylight if you give me the truth," replied Bruno.

"I can't trust you, Senor Bruno. I can read treachery in your face. Do with me as you will, I will tell you nothing," replied the boy, with the firmness of despair.

"You see yon skeletons? They died as you shall die, in the darkness and by drowning, like a couple of rats in a trap. See here!" he cried, seizing the lantern from the hands of his mate and swinging it to one side of the platform. Ned followed his motions and, saw a small rill of water, which came from the sea outside, running down the rock. It ran a yard or two in a shallow channel furrowed out of the platform and disappeared down a jagged crevice.

"That little stream seems harmless, does it not?" grinned the skipper, unpleasantly. "And so it is if left undisturbed. But suppose its course is cut off from the hole, where will it run to? Down into that slope, which will, in a few hours, fill up to the level on which we now stand. Any one tied to that ring where the skeletons are would then be under water, and as a consequence must drown. Understand?"

Ned understood, but made no reply.

"Those bones yonder belonged to a man and woman, once," the rascal continued, in a tone of satisfaction. "I honored the woman with my love."

"Your love!" said Ned, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone.

"Yes, my love. She was a pretty girl, almost as pretty as Senorita Cabilero."

Ned winced at the mention of her name.

"I was then only the mate of the schooner outside. She spurned my love for the attentions of the captain. The silly fool thought him the better match. Perhaps he was, and they might have been happy had I not vowed to have revenge on both. I knew of this cave and its possibilities, and bided my time. By various means I brought about a mutiny on the vessel one night as she lay anchored outside, with the captain and his newly wedded bride aboard. I became captain myself, and with the help of two of the crew brought my victims here and had them fastened to that ring. Then with a shovel I did this."

He took the implement Sanchez had brought and took up a quantity of dried turf that had evidently laid in the place a long time. He cast the turf over the channel of the rill. The water ceased to flow away into the hole, but began running over the edge of the platform and down the incline till it reached the moldering bones of the two skeletons. Bruno walked straight across it and entered a second in the lantern light.

There it stopped and collected in a pool, that slowly widened out and grew momentarily deeper.

"Now you can see how they died, Senor Americano. Do you wish to share their fate? It remains for you to say."

He favored the boy with a malevolent smile, which resembled that of Mephistopheles at the moment he sealed the fate of his victim, Faust. Ned, however, didn't believe that he could save his life by telling what Bruno wanted to know. Had he thought so he would have come to terms with him very quick.

"I have nothing to say," answered the boy.

"You defy me to my teeth?" roared Bruno, his eyes flashing fire.

"Yes. Do your worst. I will never take water from a man of your stamp. It is only a question of time before you'll see your finish. You expect to marry Senorita Cabilero, and settle down at her hacienda in full possession, not only of her property but her father's interest in the silver mine in El Madra range. Well, it strikes me that the moment you reappear in San Benito the American Consul at La Paz will demand of you what you have done with the two young sailors of the yacht Sea Nymph you carried off with the senorita. You have sneered at the American flag, but you'll find that its folds protect those born under it, or who become citizens of the United States. And perhaps the Governor of Lower California will have something to say about your abduction of Don Jose's daughter, as well as the capture and detention of the don himself when that fact reaches his ears. Don't imagine that you are the whole thing in this world because your word is law on board your schooner. You are little better than a pirate, and there is plenty of law to cover your case. That's all I've got to say to you."

It was with some difficulty that Bruno held himself in check while he listened to the stinging words of the American lad. When Ned ceased speaking he burst forth in a torrent of imprecations. After abusing the boy to his heart's content, he ordered Sanchez to kick the skeletons from the ring and tie Ned to it.

"You shall die like a dog!" he hissed, as his

mate proceeded to carry out his orders. "In an hour the water will reach your knees. In three hours your waist. And in three more, your mouth. So you will feel death creeping slowly upon you, and you will know that there is no one near to aid you. Then you will cry and shriek for mercy, you dog of a Gringo, but you will get none. I will return to feast my eyes on your dying struggles. I will laugh at you when the water bubbles about your lips, enters your nose and chokes off your breath. Ah, it will be a rare sight to witness your fruitless struggles for air. And when the end comes, then will my revenge be satisfied for the blow you gave me. Bah! I spit on you!"

Sanchez had now bound Ned to the ring with the rope he fetched along for that purpose. The water around the boy's feet was already two inches deep and steadily rising.

Satisfied that Ned was helpless and must meet his fate the ruffian mate rejoined his skipper on the platform above where the boy saw them glaring down at him as Bruno held the lantern well up so its rays would rest on the form of his victim.

"Adios, Senor Americano," said Bruno, with a mocking bow. "Come, Sanchez, we will leave the brave youth to reflect on his situation. We have the other chap to attend to. Perhaps we will bring him here to see his friend to say a last good-by. We will see."

With those words Bruno stalked into the narrow passage, followed by the mate. With their departure went the dull gleam of the lantern, and Ned was left in the dark to face a horrible death alone.

CHAPTER VII.—Barney Saves Ned.

We will not attempt to describe the lad's feelings as, left to himself, he began to realize the full significance of his fate. He saw no hope of escape, but for all that he tried desperately to free himself from the rope which held him to the ring. But a sailor had bound him with knots that would not slip, and his struggles were fruitless. At length, utterly exhausted by his efforts, he stopped and stared into the darkness of the cave. His eyes, now accustomed to the deep gloom, could make out certain projecting rocks here and there, and his excited fancy transformed them into phantom faces hovering about the interior of the Death Cave, watching him, and counting the passing moments of his brief span of life.

A movement, involuntary on his part, of his feet, showed him that the water was half way up to his knees. After that he kept a kind of tab on its rise, wondering when it would reach his knees, then his waist, then his chest, then his neck, and then—but the final scene of the tragedy was too terrible for him to dwell upon, and so his thoughts wandered off to Barney and Pepita. He wondered what fate would be meted out to his friend, for he did not believe that Bruno would permit the Irish boy to escape and become a witness against him. And then he tried to imagine what was going on aboard the schooner with relation to the Spanish girl and her father. Would she hold out against the scoundrel, or

would his threats to sacrifice her father, if she defied him, intimidate her into compliance with his wishes? Desperate as was his own situation, his heart went out to the young girl in the hour of her terrible trial.

In the meantime, Barney O'Toole had his own troubles, the chief of which was the separation of himself and Ned. He was attached to the side of the mast which commanded a full view of the mouth of the cave, and he watched the two rascals and his friend enter its portals and then disappear through a hole at the back. He had serious misgivings concerning the fate designed for his friend. He remembered what Ned had said about the Death Cave, and as time passed away he grew more nervous and uneasy.

"If they kill him in there, I suppose it'll be my turn next," he muttered to himself, with his eyes on the cavern. "Faith, it's too bad that hivin lets a scoundrel like the skipper have his own way. It's a wonder somethin' doesn't happen to the old ruffian. It would be a dispensation of Providence if a rock fell on his head and made a cornse of him, then he would get his jue."

No attention was paid to Barney by the crew as they lounged about the deck. As the sun grew stronger they disappeared down into the forecastle, only one man remaining to watch for the return of the captain and the mate. He took up his position under the shelter of one of the boats. Barney soon grew restive under the fierce rays of the sun, which appeared to be slowly parboiling him.

"Begorra, I've read about how the Injuns burnt their prisoners at the stake. If this ain't nixt dure to it I dunno what is. If I'm kept here much longer there'll be nothin' left of me but a grease spot. Faith, one would think these ruffians were cannibals and were roastin' me for their dinner."

He moved uneasily about, and one of his hands resting on a hot part of the mast he gave it an involuntary jerk as one would do if he touched a heated stove, or some other extra warm object. His squirming had loosened the rope which held him to the mast, and the result was his hand came free. He was then able to pull his other hand out easily.

"Faith, that's a great relief, so it is, to get me arms free. I belave if no wan was lukin' I could get away from the mast altogether."

He looked cautiously around the deck, the loosened strands around his body enabling him to work himself around from the starboard side of the main boom to its port side. He could see no one but the man lounging under the boat, and his back was turned to him. The sounds that came from the galley showed that the cook was busy there. He only came outside once in awhile to wipe his face, or to dump some peelings into the swill bucket.

"Begorra, I won't have such another chance to give these chaps the slip, so it's me that'll do it if I can, for there is no tellin' what'll happen to me when the skipper and the mate gets back," mused Barney.

He shoved his hand into his pocket, pulled out his jackknife, opened the big blade and cut the rope around his middle. Then he severed the now loose one across his chest. That left him free as the air, and he hastened to make good use of his liberty. The lone watcher was leaning over the starboard bulwark, gazing shoreward.

Barney glided over to the port bulwark, mounted it and let himself drop lightly into the water. Then he struck out for a projecting point of the shore about a hundred yards away, never thinking that a shark might get him before he reached the island. He was a good swimmer, however, and made little sound in the water, therefore, if there were any sharks in the vicinity they were not attracted to him.

He reached the rocky point without misadventure, and the man leaning over the bulwark did not see him in the water, his attention was not directed that way. As soon as he landed, Barney dropped out of sight behind the rocks, congratulating himself that his escape had not been noticed.

"Whin they foind me gone they'll be after me, I suppose," he thought. "I must take toime by the forelock and get as far away as possible. Yet I hate to desart Ned. I know he wouldn't lave me in the lurch if he was in me shoes. But I don't see what I can do for him."

At that moment Bruno and Sanchez came out of the big cave and walked down to the boat.

"There are them men now, and Ned isn't with them. They must have fixed him somehow in the back part of the cave. Oh my! I hope they haven't gone and killed him. If they have, begorra, I'll get square wid 'em—that is, if they don't catch me before I can do it!" muttered Barney, watching Sanchez pull off to the schooner. The mate ran the boat under the vessel's stern and they both got on board. Sanchez glanced along the schooner's deck before he followed the skipper down into the cabin, and he did not notice the absence of Barney from the mast. The solitary watcher left the starboard bulwark after the two officers got back, and after a turn up and down the deck, during which he, too, failed to observe that the Irish boy was not where he had been tied, he dived into the forecastle.

Barney saw that the schooner's deck was quite deserted.

"Now's me chance to slip into the cave and see what's happened to Ned," he thought. "If them blackguards discover me escape in the meantoime they'll niver suspect I have taken refuge in the cave, so I'll escape them."

The Irish lad sneaked over and entered the large cavern. As that was wholly exposed to the sight of any one on the vessel's deck, he darted for the dark opening in the back. He found himself in the first passage and that carried him into the inner cave.

"Are yez here, Ned?" he cried out.

He received no answer.

"Begorra, it's as black as the ace of spades in here, so it is. I must luk out that I don't fall into some hole."

He moved cautiously forward and came against the corner of the next passage.

"Sure, here's another wan of them entries or tunnels. I'll see where it lades to," said Barney.

He walked forward till he found what seemed to be another cave. His eyes were now getting accustomed to the darkness, and he could see somewhat better, though he could make nothing out.

"Are yez here, Ned?" he asked again.

Still no reply came from his friend.

"If he's here he's dead, I'm afeard; but maybe there's another cave still beyant."

Feeling about he located the long, narrow passage that led direct to the Death Cave. Passing slowly through this he came out on the platform.

As he had encountered no pitfalls in the other caves, he suspected none in this one, and started ahead with confidence. The result was, by not knowing that the floor descended with a sharp decline, he lost his balance, struck the smooth rock with a whack and slid down smack against the helpless form of Ned. The howl he uttered was the first indication Ned had that some one had come into the Death Cave in the dark. The water was half way up to his knees, and Barney went into it with a splash, fetching up against the wall with one foot, and Ned with the other. Only his lower extremities got wet, but he was scared to death over his sudden and unexpected tumble.

"Howly smoke! where am I at all, at all?" ejaculated Barney.

"Barney!" cried Ned, in joyful surprise.

"Ned, is that yez? Then yez are not dead!" exclaimed the Irish lad, scrambling on his feet with some difficulty and grabbing hold of his friend.

"Dead, no; but unless you can help me I will be."

"Help yez? Begorra, that's me! What's the matter wid yez? It's so dark, sure I can't see much. Are yez tied up? Faith, I see yez are. Thin, it's meself will have yez free in a jiffy. Didn't I cut meself loose aboard the schooner and give them blackguards the leg bail? Sure I did, or I wouldn't be here."

"You made your escape, then?"

"Faith, I did and I dunno if they have found it out yet," said Barney, cutting Ned loose from the iron ring. "There yez are, as free as meself. Now the question is, can we get out of this? We're down somewhere away from the dure, in a puddle of wather. Begorra, it seemed to me as if I slid a mile before I landed against ye and the wall."

"You only slid about six feet."

"Is that all? Oh, thin we'll be out of this in no time. Is this place what they called the Death Cave?"

"It is, and it's a Death Cave for a fact. I should have been drowned in a time if you hadn't come to my aid."

"Drowned, is it? What, in this little puddle?"

"Little puddle it may be now, but the water is steadily rising, inch by inch, and in a few hours will be even with the platform."

"What platform?"

"A narrow ledge of rock around the passage through which you passed to come here. You stepped off it in the dark and slid down into this death trap."

"If this is a death trap, let's lose no time in gettin' out of it."

"Follow me on your hands and knees and we'll get out of it. I know just where the platform and the passage are," said Ned.

"Do yez, now? What a blessin' the knowledge is under the circumstances ye mention. Go on and I'll kape close behind yez."

In less than a minute the two boys had scrambled up on the platform.

"Wait till I push the dirt away so that the water will resume its rightful course and then

'we'll try to escape from these caves,' said Ned.

He moved cautiously forward till his feet encountered the mound of turf. He shoved it over onto the incline, and the rill of water quickly sought its former way to the hole in the platform.

"Now, come on!" he said to Barney.

They passed through into the middle one of the three inner caves, and thence into the next the big open cavern. Then they continued as far as the opening into the big cavern, where they could see the schooner in full view.

"We can't go any further without being seen," said Ned.

"Why not?" said Barney. "I don't see any wan on deck."

A careful examination of the schooner showed that Barney was right.

"Sure, they haven't discovered me escape yet, but they will as soon as the mate comes on deck," he said. "Now's our chance to get away while they're below."

"Where can we go that they won't see or find us?" asked Ned.

"We can get behind them rocks where I hid first, and thin by kapin' them bechune us and the schooner we'll be able to get away to some other part of the island."

"All right. We can't stay here without taking the risk of certain capture," said Ned. "You'd better take the lead now and I'll follow."

"Thin, come on. If wan of them comes on deck and catches sight of us we'll have to run for it, but I hope nothin' like that happens."

He started, and Ned kept close behind him. Luck favored them, and they reached the rocks unseen.

CHAPTER VIII.—In Hiding.

"I wish I could help Pepita and her father to escape from the clutches of that rascally Mexican," said Ned, as they paused for a few minutes behind the shelter of the rocks and looked toward the schooner.

"Sure, don't talk about impossibilities," replied Barney, impatiently. "It's lucky we are to get away ourselves, and it may be that we'll be recaptured yet."

"I hope not," said Ned, with a shudder, as he recalled the horror of the Death Cave, where he felt sure he would be returned were he to be caught.

"Yez may well say that, after the escape yez had. Come now, let's look out a hidin'-place for oursilves."

The boys started over the rocks, and their way led them by degrees to the top of the great cavern. From this spot they got a full view of the island and found it was a small one. The eastern or opposite end was low and covered with tropical trees and vegetation.

"Maybe we'll foind some fruit to ate down there," said Barney, his mouth watering at the idea. "It's hungry I am, for we haven't had a dacint male since we had our last dinner aboard the yacht."

Ned was hungry, too, for the rations served to the crew aboard the schooner had been far from satisfactory to him, and he had eaten only enough to stave off hunger.

"Wait till we take one more look at the schooner," he said.

They crawled to the edge of the rocks and looked down. The whole crew was on deck now and there appeared to be some excitement on board. Sanchez was talking around in the waist, and from the sound of his voice, which reached the boys, he was jawing the men. Barney's escape had been discovered, and they were searching the vessel for him. While they were taking in the scene, Bruno came up out of the cabin and his mate joined him.

He was doubtless telling him about the disappearance of their second prisoner. That information put the skipper in a great stew, and he walked the after deck in an angry way.

"They'll soon be makin' for the shore to hunt for me," said Barney. "We'd better get away as far as we can. It's a great pity this island isn't bigger so we could give him a good run for their money."

The boys hurried down to the level part of the island and were soon among the trees, many of which were of the banana variety and loaded with the luscious fruit. They speedily gathered a bunch and divided it between them. After eating half a dozen they started to look around for a hiding place. The thick shrubbery offered inviting retreats, but not over-secure ones if the Mexican sailors beat up the ground in a systematic way, as they were likely to do under the leadership of the skipper and the mate.

While looking around, the boys got close to the water's edge.

"Hello! there's a boat!" cried Ned, pointing to a ship's gig, with a pair of oars in her, which had in some way floated to the island and grounded on the beach.

"Begorra, we can row away in that," said Barney.

"We wouldn't get far before the rascals, if they come this way, would see us and give us chase in one of their boats," said Ned. "With half a dozen of the sailors at their oars we'd soon be run down and nabbed."

"Thin, what good is the boat to us?" said Barney, much disappointed.

"We'll take possession of her, anyway," said Ned. "Dump the bananas aboard and we'll get another bunch."

When they had placed a second lot of the fruit in the bow of the gig they got in and Ned, taking the oars, began pulling slowly along the shore.

"Keep your eyes skinned for a spot where we can run in and hide," he said. "And also watch out for signs of the enemy."

Barney saw no safe retreat for the boat until they reached the rocky part of the island, and then he called Ned's attention to a dark tunnel into which the sea flowed and ebbed.

"That's just the place for us," said Ned, when he looked at it. "It's as dark as pitch in there, and the Mexicans will never come looking for you here, as they will naturally believe you are somewhere hidden on the island. We'll be safe enough here, and as we have the bananas we won't starve for the present. We will have to remain in there till dark, at any rate."

The entrance was just high enough for them to glide in without hitting their heads, but not wide enough to use the oars, so Ned took them in, after

giving the gig enough impetus to carry her out of sight. They were able to go in some distance by pushing against the rocky wall. The action of the tide had a tendency to float the gig out again, but the boys easily maintained their position by holding on to a rocky projection.

"When Bruno goes to the Death Cave to gloat over my dying struggles, as he told me he would, he'll get the surprise of his life," said Ned. "He'll see I have been cut loose and, of course, he'll lay that to you, Barney."

"Let him, faith. What do I care?"

"He'll be a wild man, all right. He'll have every man ashore, then, hunting for us both."

"And they'll find us, I don't think."

"Do you know that would offer us a fine chance to rescue Pepita and her father."

"It's Pepita yez have got on the brain. Do yez want to run our heads into the lion's jaws again on her account?" growled Barney.

"I'd like to save her."

"Faith, I fail to see how yez can."

"If Bruno and all hands come ashore hunting for us there'll be nothing to stop us from going aboard and getting the don and his daughter off."

"Do yez suppose he's such a fool as to lave them two alone on the vessel?"

"Why not? If he takes the two boats they couldn't get away. Besides, where would they go that he couldn't find them?"

"The cook would be left aboard, at any rate."

"He's only one, and doesn't amount to a whole lot."

"He could give the alarm and that would bring the bunch back."

"We would set their boats adrift before we rowed to the schooner, and they couldn't follow us."

"If no wan was watchin' thim."

"Bruno wouldn't consider it necessary for the boats to be watched."

"How do yez know he wouldn't, wid us somewhere around? Wouldn't he fear we might come that way and make off wid thim?"

"No; he'd figure that we were hiding in the vegetation at the other end of the island."

"Well, how are yez goin' to find out whether he brings all the hands ashore or not?"

"By keeping watch."

"We can't do that widout lavin' this snug retreat. Ye said a few minutes ago that we'd have to stay here till dark."

"I know I did, but that was before I thought of the chance to save Pepita and her father."

"It's afeard I am that girl will be the death of us both, yez are that stuck on her."

"You should remember, Barney, that it's our duty to save them if we can. They are up against a tough game, with not a friend in sight but ourselves. It will give us a lot of satisfaction, too, to know that we have blocked that Mexican scoundrel at all points," said Ned.

"If we succeed it will, but if we're nabbed it's mighty poor satisfaction we'll have. He'll give us both a short shift for our lives for givin' him so much trouble."

"I'd rather die like a man than live like a coward."

"That's a very foine sintiment when ye rade it in a book, but me loife is more important to me than all the sintiments in the world."

"All right, Barney, you needn't take any more risk than is necessary. I'll go out on the rock and watch while you can remain here. If I don't come back you'll know I've been recaptured, and then you will have to shift for yourself the best you can. In that case I'd advise you to stay here during the day till the schooner leaves, after which you can remain on the island till some craft comes along and takes you off."

"Do yez think I'll let yez risk your loife alone? Niver, begob! Did yez iver know an Irishman who was a coward whin it came to the rale pinch? Niver on your life! I'm wid yez, even if I don't agree wid your sintiments."

"You're all right, Barney, but there is no occasion for us both to watch the schooner. I can do it better from the shelter of the rocks than we could both do it from the boat, where we should be exposed to the sharp eyes of the enemy. If it comes to the point that I see the chance to save Pepita and her father, then I'll call on you for a little of your Irish backbone," said Ned.

"Sure, if it comes to a scrimmage I'll be there wid both fate!"

After some further talk the boat was allowed to drift to the mouth of the water-hole, and there Ned left it and took his way cautiously over the rocks.

CHAPTER IX.—Ned Rescues Don Jose and Pepita.

Ned found a sheltered spot where he could watch the schooner without running much risk of being seen from any point of the compass. Everything appeared quiet aboard the vessel. There was not a soul in sight, though as it was about noon the cook was doubtless in the galley preparing the crew's dinner. Ned watched a few minutes, and then it struck him that the rascals had come ashore to search for Barney. He worked around further till he could see the beach in front of the cave. Sure enough, there were the two boats tied to a rock. But there was a sailor watching them. He was sitting on a flat rock with his back toward Ned. He seemed to be half asleep, from his attitude. Ned was about to return and tell Barney how things were when a daring idea struck him. That was to creep over to the beach, crawl up behind the watcher, knock him out and capture the boats. It seemed quite possible for him to carry the plan out successfully. At any rate, it was the only feasible way of acting, under the circumstances. Time was precious anyway. Ned had nerve and resolution enough to do anything for Pepita's sake, and so he started forward at once, keeping a sharp eye out for the possible appearance of the enemy, who were liable to return at any moment. He reached the beach in a few minutes and then, like an Indian of old, he crept upon his victim. A piece of wood, cast up by the sea, lay in his path. He picked it up and went on. The sailor never moved. The heat of the sun had sent him into a doze. Ned got close behind him when the man suddenly woke up and started to get up.

Bang! Ned brought the piece of wood down on his head, and the rascal dropped like a stricken animal. He was down and out, for he never

moved an eyelid, though he was not much hurt.

Leaving him lying in his tracks, Ned unmoored the boats and got into one of them. Tying the painter of one to the stern of the one he was in, Ned seized a pair of oars and rowed away. His original idea had been to take the boats around to the water-hole and take Barney to the schooner with him. It now struck him that he could save time by going direct to the vessel and taking Pepita and her father off before Bruno and his crowd showed up. Time was more important in his opinion than anything else, just then.

Accordingly, he headed for the vessel and hauled up under her stern. Before going aboard he careened one of the boats so that it took enough water aboard to sink it to the bottom. Then he sprang on the stern of the schooner. The Mexicans ashore were not anywhere in sight. As for the cook, who was presumably in the galley, there were no signs of him, either. Ned darted down into the cabin. He saw that it was deserted. There were four doors leading into staterooms—two on each side. He opened the first he came to and found it was vacant. Ned judged it was Bruno's. A key stood in the next one. Trying the knob, the boy found that the door was locked. He turned the key and threw the door open. Pepita was lying on the berth inside with her eyes wide open.

"Pepita!" cried Ned.

"Senor Barry!" she cried, with a scream of joy, springing up and rushing to him. "You have escaped!"

"Yes, senorita."

"Senor Bruno told me that he had left you to drown in the cave on shore, and I have been weeping for you, my brave defender," she said, pressing his fingers to her lips. "How did you escape?"

"I have no time to tell you now. The rascals are on shore, hunting for my friend, who also made his escape. I have come to save you and your father. We have not a moment to lose. Come!"

She followed him into the cabin. Then she darted over to one of the other staterooms, turned the key and called her father out.

"Father, this is the brave boy, Senor Barry, who tried to save me from being carried from the hacienda. Senor Bruno made a prisoner of him also, and would have killed him but he has escaped, somehow. Thank him, my father. He is a splendid Americano."

"No time," interjected Ned, hastily. "Come, both of you. I have a boat ready to take you away to a snug retreat, where the Mexican rascals never will think of looking for us. Come, quick!"

He rushed them up the short companionway to the stern deck. The coast was still clear.

"Let me help you into the boat, senorita," said the boy.

She gave him her hand and was quickly seated in the little craft.

"Now, Don Jose, down with you!" and Ned gave him a hand, too.

He sprang in himself, seized the oars and began rowing toward the rocks. Not a sound except what came from the oars broke the stillness of the spot. The rascals were doubtless hard at

work beating through the shrubbery and trees at the eastern end of the island, the only likely place where they figured that Barney could be hiding. As yet Bruno was not aware of Ned's escape, for he had had no time to visit the Death Cave.

When he caught Barney it intended to serve him out in the same way as he had fixed Ned.

The longer the fruitless search for the Irish boy went on the more furious he got, and in that state he was a mighty dangerous man. His feelings, however, would be hard to describe when he finally went back to the patch of beach where the boats had been left and he discovered they were gone. The chances were the unfortunate watcher would catch it hot. How he would act when he eventually reached his schooner and found that the senorita and her father were gone, too, we will not attempt to foreshadow. The cook, as the only person left on board, might catch it in the neck. Kind Fortune favored Ned, the girl and her father. The boat reached and vanished around the rocks without anything happening. From that point to the water-hole was but a short distance, and Ned soon covered it. The boat glided in and almost frightened Barney out of his shoes, for he believed the rascally Mexican bunch were coming in to search the hole.

"Hello, Barney!" cried Ned.

"Oh, heaven! Is it ye, and I thought it was the skipper and the mate, wid a few of his iligant blackguards. Did yez run off wid wan of their boats and it's niver the senorita and her old man yez have got wid yez?"

"Yes, Barney. I've got the young lady and her father."

"Then yez had the nerve to go aboard the schooner widout me at your back? Begorra, yez bate Brian Boru for pluck, so yez do, and they say he was the bravest Irishman who iver lived, barrin' meself, of course."

"Draw your boat further back," said Ned.

"Faith, I will if I can," and Barney did.

"This is out retreat, senorita," said Ned. "We are quite safe here unless those scoundrels should nose us out. As there is a possibility of them doing that I think the safest plan for us to do is to leave the island just as soon as the rascals return to their vessel, which they'll have to do by swimming."

"Thin it's meself hopes the sharks will get some of them—the skipper, for instance, and his brute of a mate," put in Barney.

Pepita declared that Ned was the bravest and finest boy that ever lived, and it was a great pity he wasn't a Spaniard.

"I'm perfectly satisfied as well as proud to be an American," he answered. "The only thing your nation can surpass us is in the beauty of some of the ladies, yourself for instance."

"Oh, Senor Barry, you are so complimentary!" blushed the girl.

It was too dark, however, for Ned to see the roses in her cheeks. Don Jose now took the opportunity to thank Ned for his services in their behalf, as well as for his gallant defense of his daughter at the hacienda, which got him and his friend in trouble.

"You are welcome, Don Jose. We Americans know our duty and always perform it, be the consequences what they may," replied Ned.

"The Americans are a brave nation," said the Spaniard.

"Hand over some of those bananas, Barney," said Ned.

Barney did so, and Ned presented a small bunch of the fruit to the girl and her father.

"Oh, thank you, Senor Barry! They are delicious," said Pepita.

After talking for about half an hour, Ned said he was going outside on the rocks to watch the actions of the Mexicans when they returned to the shore, if they had not already done so.

Barney volunteered to go in his place, as he thought his friend had done his share, but Ned said, "No."

The girl begged Ned to be careful of himself, for if anything happened to him she declared that it would make her very miserable. He assured her he would be prudent and, telling Barney to show the girl down alongside, and exchange places with him, he made his way to the entrance and tied the boat there. Creeping over the rocks, he reached his former place of observation.

Things were just as before, the searchers not having returned. The cook appeared to have dinner all ready, for he was leaning over the bulk-wark, looking shoreward. The sailor Ned had knocked out was still lying on the beach where he had fallen.

"I know I didn't kill him," thought the boy, "but I gave him a pretty hard rap. He'll come around by and by."

Fully half an hour passed and then the Mexican bunch, headed by Bruno and Sanchez, came down the rocks at the opposite side of the beach.

After a search of at least three hours, they had failed to find any signs at all of Barney, and the rascally skipper was as mad as several hatters. The eagle eye of Sanchez noticed right away the absence of the boats, and called Bruno's attention to the fact. He also saw the prostrate and unconscious sailor on the beach.

"Diablo!" he cried "Something is wrong here."

He sprang down, followed by the skipper and the rest. The knocked-out sailor was just coming to, and the mate yanked him on his feet with little ceremony.

"The boats—where are they?" he demanded.

"Where should they be?" growled the sailor, rubbing his dazed head.

"What is the matter with you? Have you been asleep, dog?" cried the mate, shaking him savagely.

"No. I was struck down by a rock, or something else, from behind, by somebody."

"Struck down!" cried Bruno, butting in. "Ha! your head is cut. The boy we were after attacked you, perhaps?"

"I don't know. I didn't see any one," replied the sailor.

"Where can he have hidden himself?" cried the infuriated skipper.

"He has no doubt gone off in one of our boats, and taken the other to prevent us following him," said the mate. "How are we going to reach the schooner?"

"Run up to the top of the cavern and look around on the fater," ordered the skipper to one of the men. "Our boat can't be far off."

The sailor hastened to obey orders.

"While we are waiting we'd better go into the

Death Cave and see if the other prisoner is safe," said Sanchez. "Who knows but that boy we are after went in and released him."

"Caramba! I should hope not!" cried Bruno. "But we have no light."

"I have some matches and we know the place well."

"Por dios! If he has escaped that sailor shall take his place!" gritted the skipper.

He and the mate entered the cavern, made their way quickly to the Death Cave and soon discovered that the victim had escaped his fate. Bruno was sumptuously furious and filled the air with his imprecations. He rushed out with the mate, seized the unfortunate man who had been left on watch, and berated him unmercifully. Then they both dragged him into the cavern and thence to the Death Cave, where the burly Sanchez, despite his struggles, bound him to the ring with the very ropes that had been used on Ned.

Then they left him there without turning the rill of water into the trap. When Bruno and Sanchez returned outside, the sailor the former had sent to the top of the cavern had returned and reported that there was no sign of the boats anywhere.

"Go back and keep a sharp lookout. Signal us if you see the boats," said the skipper, who ordered three of the men to swim off to the schooner and make some kind of a raft to take all hands off.

They obeyed, and the rest of the party entered the big cavern to await the completion of the job. Ned had been a witness of all that happened after the return of the searching party, and it struck him that now was a good time for their party to leave the island, as it wasn't unlikely that a search of the rocks on that side, which would result in the discovery of the water-hole, would take place after the men had had their dinner. He, therefore, hastened back to broach the matter to Barney and Don Jose.

CHAPTER X.—Out of the Frying Pan Into the Fire.

Pepita received Ned's return with every token of delighted satisfaction.

"Ah, Senor Barry, I have been so anxious while you were away lest harm befall you, but now you have returned and I am quite happy," she said.

"Thank you, Senorita Pepita, for the interest you show in me," replied Ned, in the seventh heaven of delight to hear her express herself in that way toward him.

"I shall always take an interest in you after what you have done for my father and myself. Ah, I shall never forget you—never!" she cried with the enthusiasm of her race.

"I shall never forget you either, Senorita Pepita," replied Ned, with an earnestness that sent the blood to her face and made her susceptible young heart beat like a trip-hammer.

Already she was feeling a strong interest in this brave American boy, who had risked much in her behalf and her father's. It having been decided to make a start before the Mexicans got busy on the hunt again, they lost no time in leaving the water-hole. The gig was secured behind

the schooner's boat, and gathered before they finally left the island. The boy did the rowing, and they soon had the boat near the spot where Ned discovered the gig.

They found all the fruit they wanted near there, and in the course of half an hour were ready to leave the island. By that time, however, a breeze had sprung up, and this presented a serious question. The moment they got well away from the shore they would probably be seen by the Mexicans, who were doubtless on the lookout for the missing boats. Now while the rascals had no boats to chase them, still, with the aid of the wind, they could run them down in the schooner. Under such circumstances, Ned was of the opinion that it would be safer for them to return to the water-hole and lie low there, than to risk pursuit by the vessel, which, being a fast boat, would surely overtake them. The rest agreed with whatever Ned thought was right, for they regarded him as their leader, and so back to the water-hole they went.

Ned did not venture out any more to see what their enemies were up to, as he did not see that it would be of any particular benefit to them, while, on the contrary, it might lead to their detection and possible capture. Doubtless, the Mexicans kept a sharp eye on the surrounding ocean and at the same time resumed their search. As they had no boat with which to circumnavigate the island, Ned felt reasonably assured that they would not come near the water cave. Still, if they took the notion to clamber along the rocks that he himself had traversed they would come to it. Even if they did that they couldn't enter it, and it was too dark for its recesses to be surveyed from the outside. The afternoon passed away, Ned and Pepita conversing together in low tones, Barney and Don Jose seeking refuge in their own thoughts.

At last the sun went down and darkness came on quickly, for the island was only about eighteen degrees north of the Equator. The party partook of a supper of bananas and other fruit, and when it was as dark as it was likely to get they left the shelter of the water-hole and started for the eastern end of the island, whence they intended to shape their course for Mexico, trusting largely to the chance of being picked up by a passing vessel. Had Ned been a good sailor he would have noticed that the sky had a suspicious look to the eastward, and would have hesitated to trust himself and his party in an open boat to a possible unfavorable change of the weather. As the sky looked fairly clear, and the stars were out in great numbers and the wind merely blew a fresh breeze, he had no suspicion that a change was coming.

They rounded the eastern end of the island and started on their long trip to the east, Ned and Barney taking turns at the oars. Inside of twenty minutes the island faded from their view in the gloom, and they could see nothing but a dark expanse of water around them. By this time the hazy cloud along the horizon had climbed up the sky, but the wind had died down to a very mild breeze. Suddenly Ned saw a light ahead, and he called Barney's attention to it.

"Begorra, it's a vessel of some kind. We shall be picked up," said the young Irishman.

"It's coming toward us," said Ned, "and, there-

for the craft is not heading in the direction we want to go."

"What's the difference as long as we are rescued?" replied Barney.

Ned agreed with him, and took a hand at the oars so that their rescue might be brought about as soon as possible. He told Don Jose that there was some kind of a craft approaching them, and he expected they would be picked up. The Don communicated the news to his daughter, and eagerness and hope ran high among the four in the open boat. An hour passed and the light was close upon them. In a little while they made out a small vessel which seemed to be a schooner.

Presently they were within hailing distance of her, and the two boys began to shout with all their lungs.

"Hello!" returned a voice. "Who are you?"

"Four people in an open boat," replied Ned.

"Pull alongside!" was the reply.

The schooner was hove to for their benefit, and they were soon beside her. Pepita and her father were assisted aboard, and then the boys followed.

"Will you hoist the boats aboard?" asked Ned of the man, who seemed to be the mate. "One of them is loaded with bananas and other fruit."

The officer decided that he would do so, and so the boats were hoisted onto the deck. The four castaways, for so they styled themselves, were taken into the cabin, and Ned told their story to the captain. In return, he learned that the little schooner was bound from Mazatlan to the largest island of the Socorro group. The schooner was called the *Emily Dean*, and the skipper and crew were mostly Americans. She would return to Mazatlan after landing her cargo on the island.

This suited Ned and his companions, and they congratulated themselves on having such good luck. There was barely room in the cabin to accommodate the girl and her father, in a stateroom filled with odds and ends, which were removed to accommodate them for the night. The boys were sent forward to the dingy little forecastle in the bows. There were no spare bunks for them, so they were given blankets and told to turn in on the deck, which they did, and were soon asleep.

Three hours later they were rudely awakened by the rolling and pitching of the schooner in a sudden gale which had come up and struck her. She was now driving ahead, off her course, under the force of the heavy blow. Ned staggered to the scuttle opening and looked out. The sky was as black as ink, and the little craft, with her sails furled, was driving like a race-horse into the black void ahead. There was no more sleep for him or Barney.

Nor was there any for the small crew who, however, had nothing to do except to take turns at the wheel. The boys made friends with the sailors, who expected that the gale would soon blow itself out. Instead of that it seemed to increase as time went by, and the boys began to fear that the craft might founder before morning.

"Suppose we hadn't met this vessel, where would we be now?" asked Barney.

"Upset and drowned long ago," replied Ned.

"Begorra, we could. The saints be praised that this schooner came along and picked us up. I suppose the Mexican schooner has been blown

away from the island. No anchors would hold in this blow."

"This gale is from the east, and as Bruno's schooner is anchored close in to the western side of the island, and is sheltered by the high rocks of the cavern, she ought not to be in any danger. She's much better off than we are now," said Ned.

"What a pity them blackguards should have such luck. If they wint to the bottom they would only get what's comin' to them."

All night long the gale continued, and when morning dawned, like a gray pall, it was still blowing great guns, and the yeasty ocean was flattened down by the force of the wind. By that time they were fully one hundred miles west of their course and driving straight toward another group of islands, known as the Revillagigedo Islands.

This group, like the Socorro, consisted of three good-sized islands, and several small ones, extending north and south over a space of more than 100 miles. They were about 700 miles from the coast of Mexico. Gray and stormy as the morning looked, it was a relief from the darkness of an inky night. The captain of the schooner saw that it was impossible to try and recover lost ground while the wind blew with the force of a small hurricane.

He had to let his craft drive on until the weather moderated so they could shake out the sails. Hour followed hour, and there was no change for the better. Noon came and still they drove on at a fearful speed. All hands had to feast on cold provisions, and sparingly at that. It was about four in the afternoon that the skipper announced that the gale was breaking. Hardly had he made the statement when the lookout yelled frantically "Breakers dead ahead!"

The captain was aghast. He shouted orders to the helmsman, and the man obeyed, but through the murky air a white line of breakers could be seen on both the starboard and port bows. That the schooner would strike and become a total wreck was a foregone conclusion, under the circumstances. It was impossible for her to avoid the island that lay right in her course. Almost before the people on board realized their peril she fetched with a tremendous crash, the sea broke heavily over her, and she went to pieces like a house of cards.

CHAPTER XI.—The Three Wrecks.

Ned found himself in the sea, with bits of wreckage all around him, and as self-preservation is the first law of nature, he naturally struck out to prevent himself from being overwhelmed by the water. He had no time for connected thought, for he was like a cork, tossed hither and thither, until drawn into the heavy surf that rolled upon the shore. This caught and turned him over and over several times, finally flinging him upon the shore, where he lay, breathless and exhausted.

Another dark object came tumbling through the surf and landed near him. This was Barney who, having received a blow from a piece of wood, was quite unconscious. Other objects followed at intervals, most of them being inanimate

parts of the shattered schooner, and a few remained on the beach. Two human beings came ashore in each other's arms, and the surf rolled them just out of reach of the succeeding waves. These unfortunates were Don Jose and his daughter. They lay without evidence of life where the water left them. The captain had spoken truly when he said the gale was breaking. The dark clouds were sifting apart and patches of the blue sky behind could be seen for a moment, here and there. These breaks became more frequent and larger, and at last through one the sun sent its beams upon sea and shore.

The sea was tumultuous now that the wind was losing its force. It heaved in every direction, like fiercely boiling water. As the moments passed the fleeing clouds gave the sun full sway, and its rays fell upon the human bodies and wreckage that lined the shore. The first one to move was Ned. He sat up suddenly and looked around. He spied Barney a few feet away and crawled over to him. The Irish boy didn't look to be worth much at that moment.

"I hope he isn't dead!" thought Ned, anxiously.

He felt for his friend's heart, and found that it was beating with some strength.

"He'll come around all right," he muttered, thankfully. "I must drag him further up shore."

Having accomplished this, he stood up and looked along the shore.

"Poor Pepita and her father, as well as the captain and crew, are gone, I fear. Barney and I seem to be the only—no, I see two yonder, and one looks like a female. It must be Pepita."

He ran over and saw the girl and her parent locked in each other's embrace. He soon ascertained, to his great delight, that they still breathed, and made haste to drag each further out of the water's reach. The girl opened her eyes as Ned bent over her.

"Senor Barry!" she murmured in a whisper.

"Yes, senorita. You are safe ashore. How do you feel?"

"Very weak. My father—where is he?" she cried, struggling to rise.

"Here, close to you. He is alive, though unconscious."

"Poor father. He will live, will he not?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, I guess he'll pull through."

"Madre de Dios, I thank thee!" she said. "And you are saved, too, Senor Barry! How happy I am!"

"My friend is ashore also, and will be all right when he recovers his senses," said Ned. "It is almost like a miracle that we four are saved."

"The captain and sailors—are they lost?" she asked.

"I fear they are. Ah! there is a poor fellow yonder. I will go and see how matters fare with him," said the boy.

Before he could reach the motionless sailor a huge wave ran round him and when it receded it bore him out into the surf beyond Ned's reach. He walked to another dark object and found it was a sailor who was quite dead. Still another, further on, was breathing faintly, but he expired while the boy was dragging him up the beach.

There was nothing else on the shore but pieces of wreck, and these were being added to every few minutes. Ned returned to Pepita and found

her much revived. They both gave their attention to Don Jose, and brought him to consciousness. Ned then returned to Barney and found him showing signs of returning animation. In a few minutes he sat up and looked around, like one in a daze.

"Where am I, at all, at all? Oh, is that you, Ned? Begorra, I thought I was dead and buried and plavin' a harp among the angels, so I did. Where are we?"

"Ashore on some island."

"Is that a fact? And are we the only ones saved?"

"No, the senorita and her father are here, too."

"Glory be, yez don't say!"

"There they are, yonder. Let me help you over."

"Help, is it? Faith, I'm not that wake but I can use me tin toes as well as the nixt wan. Give me a lift up. Oh, how dizzy I am! I'm not as smart as I thought. Lend me the loan of your arm and I'll get along all right."

Barney walked rather unsteadily over to the spot where Don Jose and his daughter sat.

"So it's safe yez are, young leddy, and you, too, Don Josey. Let me be after congratulatin' ye on your escape," said Barney, forgetting that they did not understand English.

Ned, however, acted as interpreter, and Pepita smiled at the Irish lad.

"Now that we're ashore, what are we goin' to do, at all, at all?" asked Barney, looking around. "If we fare as well as Robinson Crusoe did we'll be all right, lavin' the savages out. I see a lot of trees beyant. I hope there's some kind of fruit on them so we can break our fast. Faith, I'm that hungry I fale like a cannibal, so I do."

"I think we'd better make a move if you and your father are able to walk a bit," said Ned to Pepita. "This island may be inhabited, and that would be a great advantage to us."

The girl said that she and her father were ready to do anything Ned suggested.

"Then we will strike across for those trees and see what is on the other side of them," said Ned.

By the time they reached the trees, Pepita did not feel that she could go any further for awhile.

"Then sit down here in the sun with your father, and Barney and I will go on," said Ned.

The two boys pushed their way through a double line of tropical trees and came out in a small banana grove.

"Bananas!" exclaimed Barney. "Begorra, I'll have me breakfast!"

"Hello! here's a hut. The island is evidently inhabited," said Ned.

They found, on investigation, that the hut was not occupied, and had not been for apparently a long time.

"This will be just the place for Don Jose and Pepita to rest in while we are away on a tour of inspection," said Ned.

So while Barney started to sample some ripe bananas, the young leader returned to the place where they left the girl and her father and escorted them to the grove. The party made a satisfactory meal off the fruit, and then Ned and Barney started to learn something more about the island. Leaving the banana grove behind they met with some cocoanut trees, with bunches of nuts ripening in the leafy tops. They did not

stop to collect any for the present, as Ned was eager to find out if there were other people on the island besides themselves. The ground led upward in a gentle rise, but the numerous trees and thick vegetation prevented them from making out much ahead.

At last they emerged on an open space, which proved to be the top of a bluff, and, to their surprise, marked the limit of the island in that direction. Below was a broad beach and then the sea. What particularly astonished them was the sight of three partly submerged wrecks lying close to the shore and about a hundred yards apart. From the general appearance of the wrecks they had been lying there a long time. This was the western end of the island; the bluff sheltered them from the gales, which nearly always came from the east.

"Sure, it appears we are not the only wans wrecked here," said Barney.

"That's true enough, for here are three dismantled craft that have met their fate on this shore. I guess there are no inhabitants on this island. It is so small that we ought to have seen somebody by this time, if there was anybody here," said Ned.

"As long as there's four of us we won't be lonesome," said Barney. "Let's take a look at wan of thim wrecks. The bow of that wan yonder is right on the beach. There's nothin' to prevent us steppin' aboard. Maybe we'll find somethin' there that'll be useful to us."

Ned had no objection. Indeed, he was just as curious as Barney to get a closer view of the wreck in question—and of the others afterward. The other two were not so easily reached, as they lay about a hundred feet off the beach. At present the water was too rough to make swimming to them desirable at present, and there was no other way of getting to them. The boys walked down to the beach and approached the wreck. Only a small fragment of her bowsprit remained. She had sunk so deep in the sand that it was no trouble for the lads to clamber on board. They stood on the deck of the forecastle and looked the craft over. The stumps of two masts indicated that she had been either a large sea-going schooner or a small brig.

Ned judged the latter, from the height of the sections of bulwark still remaining, and the fact that the forecastle and cabin were raised above the main deck. The scuttle communicating with the forecastle was open, but after looking down into it the boys concluded not to venture there until they had seen the rest of the vessel. The main hatch was battened down, though the tarpaulin which had been stretched across it was torn into strips by the weather of months. They made their way to the cabin and found that there was scarcely any of it left but a portion of the roof and sides. They found that a bulkhead closed the hold off from the water and sand, and it was apparently quite stanch.

"Well, let's go into the forecastle now," said Ned, starting back.

"Sure, it's so dark down there we won't be able to say much. If we only had some matches we'd be all right," replied Barney.

"We can feel around if we can't do better, and if we stay there awhile our eyes will become accustomed to the gloom," said Ned.

Never suspecting the surprise that was in store

for them they walked forward. Suddenly a wild-looking bearded face was thrust out of the hole and a pair of glaring eyes was fastened on them.

"Howly smoke! What's that?" ejaculated Barney, jumping back.

Ned, taken by surprise, stood rooted to the spot.

"Be hivins, it's an ourang-outang or some other kind of a wild baste!" cried the Irish boy. "Let's get away or it's murdered we'll be!"

"No, it's a man," said Ned.

"A man, is it? Thin it's a crazy-lookin' chap he is."

The apparition began to come up, disclosing a pair of bare and hairy arms of the color of mahogany. He was dressed in a very ragged suit that seemed as if only a miracle held it together.

"Murder! He's comin' at us!" cried Barney, making for the nearest bulwark. "Run, Ned, he's got a club to bate our brains out wid."

Ned, however, stood his ground, though a personal encounter with such a powerful-looking individual was not at all desirable. The man uttered some angry expressions in a strange tongue and sprang out on deck.

"Who are you?" Ned asked him.

The man made a threatening motion with his club and mumbled some more unintelligible words, working his face into strange grimaces.

"I believe he's crazy," thought Ned. "He looks as if he'd been around here a long time. Probably solitude and suffering has unhinged his mind."

The boy made a bluff to advance. The crazy man flung a handful of coins at Ned.

"Get off this wreck!" he howled.

Barney became scared and dived overboard.

"I'll tackle him alone," muttered the young castaway, and he rushed at the madman and gripped him by the arms.

CHAPTER XII.—The King of the Three Wrecks.

The crazy man shook off Ned's grasp as easily as though the boy were a child, and pushed him away.

"Away! Away or I kill!" he cried, in good English.

"Who are you, anyway?" asked Ned.

"I am king of the three wrecks. They belong to me. Their secret is mine—mine, d'ye understand?"

"What secret?"

"That you will not find out. I kill you first!" he cried, fiercely.

At that moment one of the coins the man had flung at Ned, and which had lodged somewhere about him, fell to the deck. Ned stooped and picked it up. To his astonishment he saw it was a ten-dollar piece. The man had flung a handful of similar coin at him. Ned reasoned that he must have a bunch of it in the forecastle to throw it around as if it were so much dross. Where did he get it?

Maybe there had been a box of it aboard the wreck and he had obtained possession of it. Evi-

dently, the fellow was crazy, for nobody but a lunatic would throw gold pieces around with such reckless prodigality. The fact that the man seemed to have been on the island for a considerable time was not an encouraging sign. It indicated that the island was rarely visited by anybody. On the whole, that was not surprising, since there was nothing about the island to attract visitors.

It struck Ned that a long time might elapse before he and his companions would have a chance to leave the place.

"Where did you get this money?" he asked the man, who was watching him intently. He held up the gold coin as he spoke.

"That is the secret, and it's mine," was the man's answer.

"Then there is more of it in the forecastle, eh?"

"More? Ay, ay! Heaps of it, but it's mine—all mine. No one shall rob me of my gold. I am the richest man in the world. I am king of the three wrecks, and their secret is mine."

He laughed softly to himself.

"Why are you standing there looking at me? Didn't I tell you to go? I don't want you here. Go, before I kill you!" he cried, in a fierce way.

"Why should you want to kill me? I am not trying to hurt you."

"You want to rob me of my secret. But you shall not. I am watchful. I am never asleep with both eyes. No, no; I must watch that no one robs me."

"You needn't be afraid of me. I don't want to rob you."

"Then why did you come here?"

"To look at this old wreck."

"The wreck is mine. You must go."

He flourished his club, suggestively.

"And you claim the other wrecks, too?"

"The three wrecks—yes. All mine."

"Maybe you own the island, and want us to get off that, too?"

"Yes, I own the island, but you can stay on it if you do not come aboard the wrecks."

"That's obliging of you. We couldn't leave if you wanted us to, as we have no boat."

"Boat! I want no boat. I walk from one wreck to the other at low tide."

"You're welcome to walk or swim for all I care. How do you live? On a steady diet of fruit?"

Either the crazy man did not comprehend him or did not care to answer. He shook his club, impatiently, pointed to the shore, and said, "Go!" once more.

Ned concluded he would, as he didn't see that he was gaining anything by remaining, and he saw Barney waiting for him half way up the beach. He started forward, as he did not care to jump into the water as the Irish boy had done in his fright.

The crazy man rushed to the opening of the forecastle and stood over it with his club raised in a menacing way. It was clear he did not intend to let the boy go down there. Ned had no wish to explore the man's quarters. The gold that might be down there was no temptation for him then. He did not believe there was a great

deal of it, anyway. He passed the man, reached the bowsprit and jumped on to the beach. As soon as he disappeared from the deck the strange man descended the ladder into his quarters and the wreck looked as deserted as when the boys boarded it.

"Begorra, it's a great nerve yez have to face that chimpanzee of a man and talk with him," said Barney, when Ned rejoined him. "How could yez understand his gibberish?"

"He didn't talk gibberish, but good English," replied Ned.

"And ain't he crazy at all?"

"I guess he's crazy all right. He says he's king of the three wrecks."

"The three wrecks, is it? Sure, he must be crazy!"

"He says the secret of the wrecks is his."

"What saycret?"

"How do I know? He didn't tell me."

"He's crazy! What saycret could there be about him?"

"I don't know, unless it's connected with the gold coin he threw at me."

"What's that? He threw gold coin at yez?" cried Barney, in astonishment.

"That's what he did. Here's one of them I picked up. It's a ten-dollar piece. He said he had heaps of them in the forecastle."

"Heaps of tin-dollar pieces? Faith, he's crazy all right. But where did he get that? And where are the others you say he threw at yez? Didn't yez pick them up?"

"No, they're lying around the deck somewhere. If you want them you can go back and look for them."

"Go back and mate that ourang-outang! Not for all the tin-dollar pieces in the wurruld. I have some respict for me loife."

"I suppose we'd better go back to the hut and report that the island is uninhabited except by one crazy sailor aboard a wreck on the shore."

"Do yez suppose there's a human chimpanzee like that chap on each of the other wrecks?"

"Well, hardly. That would be altogether too strange. If this chap considers himself king of the three wrecks, why, of course there are no others like him."

"I suppose, thin, we may venture aboard the others widout fear?"

"We can't very well do that now, as the sea is too high. We'll do it later on when the tide is out and the water is smooth."

They returned to the hut and found Pepita and the Don feeling greatly improved. Ned told them all they had seen, and how the island had no inhabitants other than the crazy "king of the three wrecks."

He repeated the substance of the strange man's talk, and Pepita wanted to know what the man meant by the secret of the three wrecks. Ned said he couldn't tell her, though he had a suspicion it was in some way connected with the gold pieces the fellow had flung at him.

"Barney and I will investigate the other two wrecks to-morrow or next day. By that time the weather ought to be fine again," he said.

They had another meal of fruit, to which Barney added half a dozen cocoanuts.

"It's tired we'll soon get of this diet," said the Irish boy. "I wonder if we couldn't catch a fish or two? What do yez think, Ned?"

"We might manage to. I dare say there are shell-fish in the rocks, which we can find at low tide."

"Begorra, we'll foind them if they're there, but we ought to have pepper and salt to ate them wid."

"We ought to have a good many things that we'll have to get along without," laughed Ned.

They passed the rest of the day together, taking the world easy. When darkness came the hut was assigned to Pepita, while the Don and the boys made their beds in the shrubbery close by. The sky was now as clear as a bell and the wind merely a soft ocean breeze. The ocean was still rough from the effects of the late gale. The surges beat on the shore with a monotonous cadence that lulled the castaways into a deep slumber, from which they did not awaken till morning was well on.

CHAPTER XIII—Experience on the Island.

Ned awoke first and he at once aroused Barney.

"Come," he said, "we'll go to the shore and see if we can get any shell-fish."

"I'm wid yez!" said the Irish lad.

They washed their faces at the little bubbling spring near the hut, and combed their hair with their fingers, then started for the shore.

The tide was out and the wreck the boys had visited was completely out of the water, the exposed sand extending all around her. The bows of the other two wrecks could now be seen imbedded in the shore. Both had been schooners. The foremost of one was still standing, with the ratlines sagging around it, while the other was completely shorn of everything above the deck. The hulls of all three were in very fair condition, as far as the boys could make out.

"I wonder if there really is any secret connected with those wrecks," said Ned, as he looked toward them. "That crazy rooster was very persistent on that point. He declared I should not learn what it was. Well, as we are likely to stay on this island some time, unless luck comes our way, you and I will have plenty of time to find out what the secret is, if there's one."

"But that old chimpanzee won't let us nose around what he calls his property," replied Barney.

"What right has he to call those wrecks his property?"

"Sure, bein' the only wan on the island before we came here there was nobody else to claim them. If I was in his shoes, bedad, I'd claim the whole island, and I'd hold on to it if I could."

"He does claim the island, too, but seems to have no objection to sharing it with others, provided they keep away from the wrecks."

"Well, that's fair, ain't it? If you'd lived here as long as he seems to you'd think ye had some right that other paple ought to respict."

"I guess you're right, Barney. I didn't look at it in that light. We won't interfere with the wrecks. We would have a fight on our hands if we did, and though I have no doubt we could handle the old codger, it would be a shame to hurt him, as we would have to do in order to get the better of him," said Ned.

The boys walked out among the rocks and started to look for shell-fish. While they were thus engaged the crazy man suddenly appeared from behind a cluster of rocks that were surrounded with water at high tide. He held a large tin pan in one hand, and it was filled with shell-fish.

"Oh, murder! There's the old chimpanzee now!" said Barney, looking up.

Ned rose up and looked. The wild-looking fellow beckoned to him with his disengaged arm, and then pointed at the cluster of rocks.

"What does he want?" asked Barney.

"I'll bet he's got a pan full of shell-fish, and believing we are looking for that article, he is showing us where we can get them," replied Ned.

Ned started out for the spot, and the "king of the three wrecks" moved away toward the craft on which he evidently lived. On reaching the cluster of rocks the boys found them alive with shell-fish. They filled their jackets with the fish, and by that time the tide was coming in and would soon cover the rocks. As they started back for the beach they saw that the crazy man had started a fire on the shore, near his wreck, and was holding a pan over the blaze.

"Can we use your pan when you get through with it?" asked Ned, pointing at the shell-fish in his jacket. The man understood and nodded, so the boys sat down on the rocks and waited. When he had finished his cooking he handed the pan to Ned.

"When through, leave here," he said.

"All right," replied the boy.

"You come with me and I'll give you pan to carry fish in," said the hermit of the wreck.

Ned handed the pan to Barney and followed the old chap. His conductor would not let him come aboard the wreck, telling him to wait till he brought the pan.

He presently return with both a pot and a pan and handed them down to the boy, then waved his arm for him to depart. Ned returned to the fire, and in a short time they had a pan full of roasted shell-fish. The boys were so hungry that they consumed a quantity of them while proceeding with the cooking, the rest they carried to the hut, where they found Pepita and the Don awake and waiting for them.

After they had topped off with fruit and a drink of water from the spring the four started to walk around the island together. As Pepita was particularly anxious to view the three wrecks they went in the direction of the bluff first. The tide was up and two of the wrecks were surrounded by the sea.

"Where is the wild man?" asked the girl, with her hands on Ned's shoulder and her lovely face close to his.

"He is out of sight in the forecastle of the first wreck, yonder," replied Ned. "That is, I suppose he is. He isn't anywhere on the beach."

After looking at the wrecks as much as they cared to they continued their walk, Pepita with her arm in Ned's, and apparently very happy in his company. So the party went nearly all the way around the little island, and then strolled through it, finding a number of bread-fruit trees.

Barney gathered some of the fruit and then got disgusted because it was not eatable in its raw state. Reaching the hut once more, they rested for a couple of hours and then had their dinner, which was a repetition of their breakfast. After that Ned and Barney went off to the bluff, but without any particular object in view. They would have liked to explore the other two wrecks just for the fun of the thing, but as the crazy man had been good to them they did not want to go against his wishes.

"If he had said the secret was connected with the vessel where he is living I would guess that he referred to a box of gold coin he had found in it, and didn't want any one to know about it," said Ned, as they sat on the soft turf and looked out at the wrecks, where the tide was going down again. "But to say his secret is connected with the three wrecks is making the thing too improbable."

While they sat there the crazy man came out of the forecastle and looked toward the other wrecks. He walked up and down the deck for half an hour, by which time the tide was pretty well out. Then he dived down into the forecastle again and presently returned with a good-sized pan. He leaped down on the beach and started for the nearest wreck.

CHAPTER XIV.—Secret of the Three Wrecks.

"I wonder what the old chimpanzee is after?" said Barney, curiously, as they watched him climb on board of the middle wreck, the one that had the solitary mast standing, like a demoralized lightship. They saw the old chap disappear into the vessel through some open hole and they waited with considerable interest for him to reappear. He was out of sight for a good hour, and when he came on deck again the pan seemed to be filled with something weighty, from the way he handled it.

He took a rope and lowered it on the sand, after first looking around the shore. Then he jumped down himself, picked up the pan and started with it for the first wreck. Whatever it was he had in the pan it glistened in the sunshine, and Barney hazarded a guess that it contained bits of copper he had collected from the wreck. The old fellow boarded his own craft, hauled up the pan and took it down into the forecastle with him. In a little while he made a second trip with the pan, and then a third one.

By that time the tide had started to come in again, and he visited the middle wreck no more. The boys returned to the hut, where Pepita scolded Ned for remaining so long away. After their evening meal, Ned and Pepita strolled off alone, and remained away a couple of hours. Barney and the Don devoted their time to watching for a vessel. They saw several at a long distance, but none approached near enough to the island for them to signal.

Ned and Barney saw the crazy man go back and forth between the wrecks many times during those weeks, and he always carried a pan full of glittering stuff from the middle wreck to the first one. Ned was now satisfied that what he carried was gold coin, and that the center wreck contained quite a chest full.

Neither he nor Barney made any attempt to interfere with the old chap. At length they didn't see him any more, and were somewhat surprised by that fact.

"I wonder if the old fellow is ill?" Ned remarked to Barney. "I think I'll venture aboard and find out what is the matter with him."

"Luk out that he don't bate your head off wid his club," warned Barney.

"I'll take the risk," said Ned, and he started to carry his purpose out. When he boarded the first wreck he peered down the scuttle, but all was dark and silent in the forecastle. Then he called out.

He thought he heard a groan.

"The old fellow is sick," he thought. "I must see if I can help him."

He went in the direction of the sound and almost stepped on the crazy man, who was lying on the deck of the forecastle.

"What's the matter? Are you sick?" Ned asked him.

A groan and then the man said, faintly:

"I'm dying."

Ned tried to persuade him that he was mistaken, but he insisted that his hours were numbered.

"What can I do for you?" asked the boy.

"Nothing, but I thank you for offering to help me. In return I will confide to you the secret of the three wrecks," he said, in a feeble tone. "My name is Tom Manley. I am the only survivor of these three vessels which were wrecked on this island a year or more ago. Exactly how long I don't remember, as I have not kept a record of the time. These three vessels were an expedition that went out to find a pirate's treasure in the South Pacific. The treasure was found and equally divided between the owners and crew of each craft. We were bringing it to San Francisco when we ran into a tremendous gale, which landed the whole expedition on this shore. I was the only person who survived, and what I have suffered here I think has turned my brain, for during the last few months I have hardly known just how I passed the time. This treasure is mine, by right of being the last survivor, but as I shall never need it I give it to you and your friend. More than half of it is now in the hold of this craft, under this forecastle. The balance you will find on the other two wrecks. Gather it all together while you stay on the island, and then, when you are eventually taken off by some craft that you signal, or puts in here, it will make you both rich. That is all."

He lay back and breathed heavily from the exertion of his story. Evidently his sands of life were slipping away fast. He did die an hour later, and then Ned returned to the hut, and taking Barney aside told him the remarkable story of the secret of the three wrecks.

"Begorra, it's rich we'll be if what he tould you is true," replied Barney.

They went aboard the first wreck, found some matches, and after preparing a rude torch lit it.

By its light they closed the dead man's eyes and bound them down with a rag. Then they wrapped him up in several blankets and placed him in a bunk. After that they investigated the hold and found a chest full of Spanish gold pieces, which Ned had mistaken for American ten-dollar coins.

They also found several small boxes filled with the money the crazy man had brought from the middle wreck. They then visited the middle wreck and found a chest with quite a bunch of money still in it. The third wreck contained a chest, similar to the others, but untouched. They figured that it contained the rest of the pirate treasure, and this subsequently proved to be the fact. Next day they buried the old man on the bluff, in a suitable grave, as they found a shovel on one of the wrecks. Three months later a schooner came close enough to see their signals and the four castaways and three chests of gold were taken off the island and a week later landed in San Francisco.

There proved to be about \$300,000 in the treasure, half of which Ned turned over to Barney, and that youth declared he would go back to Ireland and buy a big estate there and live like a lord for the rest of his days. As for Ned, he thought less of his newly acquired wealth than he did of Pepita, and he told her so. She told him that she would marry no one but him. The result was, Ned and Pepita were duly married and then they sailed for San Benito with Don Jose.

They went to live in the hacienda, and the first thing they heard was that Captain Bruno and his schooner had foundered in the gale which wrecked the young people, and only one man survived to bring the news to La Paz. And having told our story to its fitting end, we will now draw the curtain on the brave young American and his Spanish bride, who had greatly added to their wealth through the secret of the three wrecks.

Next week's issue will contain: "JOHNNY JONES & CO., OR, THE FIRM THAT KEPT THE BROKERS GUESSING."

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SHORT-STOP SAM

or

The Boss of the Baseball Boys

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued).

With the bases full and none out, it looked a little bad.

By the way the coacher at third was shouting Sam knew it was a good batter that was up.

"Steady, Frank!" he called out to Timlin.

Frank sent in a red-hot one, and Haverhill caught it about four inches from the end of his bat.

A deafening shout went up as everybody started to run.

The ball was a hot liner, and it was heading for a point a little to the left of our hero and a couple of feet over his head.

There was no time to study where it was going to land.

Sam made a leap sideways and the ball struck his gloved hand.

It stayed there, too, and the next instant it touched the runner from second. Then back went the powerful arm of Short-stop Sam, and the ball sailed on a line for the hands of Catcher Fred Jones.

Wap! The ball hit the big glove of the catcher just the fraction of a second before Cahill slid for the home plate.

"Out at home plate!" yelled the umpire. "Three out!"

It was a triple play Sam had made, and if ever there was a happy boy it was he at that minute.

The din that followed was almost indescribable. The fans simply went wild.

It was as sensational a play as any of them had ever witnessed.

"What do you think of that, Len?" Jack Cuny asked, when he had recovered his breath. "It looks as though it does Short-stop Sam good to be arrested, don't it?"

"Sh! Not so loud," cautioned the sneaky young man. "Don't let it get known that it was I who sent the telephone message. I only wish that hot liner had hit the young cur between the eyes instead of landing in his hand."

"Well, he is getting the best of you every time he turns around, it seems," and the president of the swell club sneered.

"But I will get square with him in the end, even if I have to kill him!" exclaimed the sneak, vindictively. "You stayed away from Hoboken, where your nine is playing today, just to see something happen to Sam Walters. And you can bet that you will see it."

"Yes, Len, I paid ten dollars for a pitcher from Brooklyn to take my place, just to stay here and see something happen to Short-stop Sam."

"Well, don't worry. Just watch the game. Before it is over I have an idea that the young cur will quit playing."

Both then turned their attention to what was going on at the diamond.

Rutcliffe had taken the field and Catcher Fred Jones was at the bat.

Jones was a pretty sure hitter, and he sent a hot grounder between short and third and reached first.

Captain Harry Bates followed with a high fly to left garden and was caught out.

Lon Seaver came next, and he got to first on a fumble by the second baseman, while Jones reached second.

Pete Perkins came next, and with a neat two-bagger sent Jones home.

It looked as though it was going to be a lucky second for the home team.

Reardon stepped up and surprised everybody by a long drive over the rightfielder's head, sending in another run. McGuire did nearly the identical thing, and another run was added to the score.

Jim O'Donnell came up and managed to reach first on a scratch hit, and then it came Short-stop Sam's turn again.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Tie!

A cheer went up from a thousand throats as Short-stop Sam hit the plate with the bat, preparatory to sending McGuire and O'Donnell around the bases ahead of him.

"Ball one!" came from the umpire, as a high one came in and caused the catcher to jump for it.

The next one Sam hit, but it was a foul, and that put one strike on him.

The two following ones were balls. That made it three balls and one strike.

Our hero was pretty sure he was going to get a chance at it now.

He got it.

An out-curve came along, which would surely have been called a strike if Sam had not let go at it with his bat.

Whack! The ball was hit squarely and away it went toward centerfield.

Short-stop Sam ran like a deer, while the crowd held their breaths to see whether the fielder would get the fly or not.

But they soon saw that he could not unless he had wings.

The ball passed over his head by a good ten feet, and went bounding clear to the fence.

Sam reached third on the hit, and sent three runs in ahead of him.

That was pretty good, and he made up his mind that they had done pretty well for the second inning.

Timlin came to the bat next and struck out, the same as the last time.

There was a grim smile on the face of the pitcher. Evidently he was making an extra effort.

"Jones to the bat!"

The catcher of the Peerless nine stepped up and did his best to bring Sam in.

But it was a failure. The best he could do was to knock a fly right in the hands of the first baseman.

That retired the side, leaving Sam at third, after making such a great hit.

But he did not care about that. The score stood seven to nothing, and that was a mighty big lead.

But this great game proved to be one of those that are full of surprises.

When Rutcliffe came in they went at it in a way that told plainly that they were after some runs.

Luck was with them, too.

Bates missed stopping a grounder by about a foot, and first base became occupied.

Timlin must have got a little careless, for he sent the next man to first on balls, thus advancing the other fellow to second.

"Everybody hold your breath!" yelled the Rutcliffe coacher. "Burton is at the bat! The catcher's got a glass arm! Watch out there, Cline! Take plenty off, Haverhill! Wow! Go it!"

The last was caused by a long drive to left-field by the batter.

Burton had caught one of Timlin's outcurves on the end of the bat, and he had worked wonders.

Over the head of Tom McGuire it went, and around the bases sailed the Rutcliffe boys.

Two runs came in, leaving Burton on third, as much pleased as any one could possibly be.

And there were none out yet!

Such a yell went up from the Rutcliffe rooters.

It was joined in by the members of the swell Sharpton club, and by those who really like to see good ball playing, no matter what side did it.

"Don't get discouraged, Frank," said Sam, as he noticed a worried look on Timlin's face. "He only hit that one by luck. Keep cool, now, and strike out the next fellow."

The plucky pitcher of the home nine nodded.

Then he did strike out the next man, and was rewarded by a rousing salute from the rooters.

One out, two runs in, and a man on third waiting to cross the plat.

"Cahill to the bat!" called out some one and the catcher of the college boys stepped up.

The first one sent in by Timlin was a high one, and it would surely have been called a ball if Cahill had not reached it with his bat and sent it out in almost the identical spot where Burton had placed his.

Burton came in and Cahill got to second.

Three runs!

When Pitcher Morris stepped up to the plate Timlin resolved to strike him out again.

But it was not going to go the way he wanted it to.

Morris batted out a hot grounder between first and second, and before O'Donnell could field the ball, got to first, while Cahill reached third.

Everson came up next. He had got out before, and he wanted to reach first this time, by the way he acted.

He hit two fouls in succession, and that made two strikes on him.

The next was a ball, and the following one another foul.

Then Timlin pitched three bad ones and he walked to first, filling the bases.

Knot was the next man to the bat, and he stepped up with a great deal of confidence.

"Steady, Frank!" cautioned Sam, who had had nothing to do at all so far this inning.

Timlin nodded, and then sent in a hot one.

"Strike!" cried the umpire.

That was gratifying to the Peerless pitcher, notwithstanding that Jones signaled for a drop.

That was where he made a mistake.

Whack! Knot could not have hit the ball any fairer, and away it went over the fence for a home run!

Seven runs that inning! The score tied! Whew!

Short-stop Sam walked to first base, while the yelling and cheering was going on.

"Harry," said he to the captain, "I guess you had better speak to Timlin. He's either doing it his own way, or else he's getting badly rattled."

Jones had already started for the pitcher, and while Sam and Harry were talking he was telling the pitcher something in an impressive way.

"Leave it to Fred, Frank!" called out Bates, as they all started back for their positions.

"All right," was the reply.

That meant that he should obey the signals of the catcher.

Whether this had anything to do with it or not, the next two men up struck out, and the second inning of a great game came to a close with the score tied.

Both teams were desperate now.

So well did the college boys handle themselves that the home team was retired without a man getting as far as second.

But when they took their turn at the bat they received a goose-egg, too.

It was certainly fine ball playing, and the crowd cheered to the echo.

The next inning was played very quickly, neither side scoring, though Peerless had two on bases when a foul fly wound up the inning.

When Sam walked out to his position between second and third for the fifth inning he was in hopes that he would have something to do.

And he did, too, for the very first man at the bat hit out a hot grounder, which he very neatly picked up and sent over to Bates on first.

The next man up got first on a scratch hit, and then things became more interesting.

The college boys were well limbered up by this time, and they certainly could find the ball, no matter what Frank Timlin did to prevent it.

Burton now came to bat, and he got a rousing cheer, for he was a great favorite with the rooters of the college team.

He got two strikes on him and three balls were called, but the next one he hit for a liner to short.

The ball was a red-hot one, but that made no difference to Sam Walters. He just nabbed it and had it to first almost before the crowd realized what had happened.

The runner on first started to run for second when he saw that Bates had the ball, but he was too late.

Harry could sprint a little, and in just five leaps he touched him with the ball.

(To be continued.)

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

FIREMAN RUNS UP 22 FLIGHTS ONLY TO FIND SMOKE HARMLESS

Fireman Patrick Caulfield ran up twenty-two flights of stairs recently in the new Chanin Building under construction at Lexington Avenue and Forty-second Street, New York, only to discover that smoke which he had seen coming from the fifty-first floor was from wet excelsior which workmen were burning on the concrete floor.

Caulfield, attached to the Prevention Bureau, was on duty at the building when he saw the smoke coming out the fifty-first floor windows. Fearing a big blaze, he took the elevator up to the twenty-ninth floor, as far as it went. Then he jumped out and ran up the stairs.

He was well winded when he reached the fifty-first floor to find the workmen burning the excelsior.

CANADA BORDER FIXED BY STARS

The International Boundary Commission has undertaken to mark beyond possibility of dispute the line between the United States and Canada. As this line is approximately 4,000 miles long and was determined by treaties between Great Britain and the United States, some of which go back as far as 1782, together with subsequent measurements and treaties agreed on from time to time, the possibilities for error and dispute to arise are easily comprehended.

That no misunderstanding may exist in the future as to the exact location of the line, the commission is to prepare maps and reports as provided under the treaty of 1925, so that retracing and remonumenting may never again be necessary.

The latitude and longitude of every point marked on the boundary line are exactly fixed through a belt of precise triangulation of the boundary, forming one great unit of precision

known as the North American Datum, 1927. It has been said, in fact, that the boundary is celestially fixed—actually tied to the stars.

If the boundary monuments were moved or destroyed, it is said that every course of the line could be retraced and the monuments re-established with a degree of precision comparable to that of geodetic control. From the geographical standpoint, therefore, the stars will have to change their course before the two countries will find cause for dispute over territorial limitations. And as the shifting position of the heavenly bodies is a matter of milleniums rather than of the centuries by which history is measured on this planet, future cause for dispute seems very far distant.

AMERICANS LEAD AS ANIMAL COLLECTORS, WITH TIGERS AND MONKEYS MOST POPULAR

According to the newspapers of Calcutta, American millionaires are as great collectors of wild animals as they are of old masters—with this difference: the former are known to be genuine. The most popular animal here is said to be the tiger, which can be obtained all the way from \$200 to \$600, according to age, beauty and previous condition of servitude. The next in popularity is the monkey. Of this animal fully 200 are exported from Calcutta weekly.

The Calcutta correspondent in The Morning Post of London declares that before the World War European zoos were the chief purchasers, but that early in 1919 Calcutta was inundated with orders from the East: "Prices ran high, and the trade experienced a boom, for private menageries had sprung up in many parts of the United States, and competition among the wealthy patrons raised prices." The correspondent thus concludes:

"The demand from America has never abated, and is not likely to do so. Most big houses in America are incomplete without private collections, which are added to practically every month. A few animals, principally monkeys, stray into Europe, but these are mainly for vivisection purposes. Germany is the chief buyer in this respect.

"The trade began in the days of sailing ships. The sailor carried home to England from the Hooghly some pet for his landlubber friends—a parrot or a monkey. When his ship reached Australia he might barter his monkey for a kangaroo. People in Britain showed a lively interest in the business; miniature menageries were gradually formed.

"Finally agents were sent out to the East to collect animals. Such men usually stayed in some wild parts for three or four months, gathering about them all that the jungle could give. Sailing ships then took the cargo to Britain, while the agent moved on to pastures anew.

"These agents were the prototypes of the traders operating today in Calcutta, Bombay, Karachi and Madras. The business in the last half century has reached big proportions, and America's collectors have given it a fresh lease of life."

What Will Watson Did

By Horace Appleton.

When Will Watson's father died, his mother, though still a very pretty woman, vowed that she would never marry again.

But before two years had elapsed she was wedded to Rufus Dornton.

Dornton was a tall, sallow-faced man, with raven-black hair and eyes.

He was as stealthy in his movements as a cat, and had a way of slipping up behind you, without attracting your attention, till he was looking over your shoulders, that was very unpleasant.

It made you feel that you were watched all the time, for you did not know at what moment he would come behind you.

Before the marriage, you would have thought that butter would not melt in his mouth; he was as good-natured as a kitten when its fur is smoothed the right way.

But it was not long before he began to show his claws.

He soon had his wife so completely under his control that she "scarcely dared call her life her own."

Nobody knew what his business was; he was going and coming at all hours, and frequently remained away from home all night, and sometimes stayed away for days at a time.

Occasionally rough-looking men came to see him after nightfall, and he always carried them, by a stairway that led up from the back of the house, to a room upstairs, which was always kept locked when Dornton was not in it.

Neither Will nor his mother was ever permitted to even look into this mysterious chamber.

On a certain day, Will had occasion to go up into the attic to look for something when two of Dornton's ill-favored visitors were with him.

He happened to stumble as he was passing the room where they were closeted, and almost in an instant the door was opened just wide enough to allow Dornton to step into the passage.

He had a candle in his hand, which he stuck close to Will's face, and, looking him straight in the eyes, hissed out:

"You miserable little scoundrel, if I ever catch you eavesdropping at this door again I will cut your heart out!"

Will was perfectly innocent, but the whole affair was so sudden, there was such a malignant gleam in Dornton's eyes and so much sternness in his voice, that Will quailed and looked guilty in spite of himself, and the explanation he wished to make died on his lips.

Sometimes Dornton was well supplied with money, and spent it with a lavish hand.

Then, again, for weeks at a time, he would not have a cent, except what he got from his wife.

But one thing he would have at all times, and that was brandy; if he could not buy it himself, Mrs. Dornton had to get it in some way or other.

One day, when Will was returning with a gallon of brandy, which he had been sent to pur-

chase, he slipped upon the ice in front of the house, fell, and broke the demijohn.

The wicker-work was not injured, and Mr. Dornton did not at first notice that anything was wrong.

Without paying any attention to what Will commenced to say about the accident, he took the demijohn out of his hand.

But the moment he heard the jingling of the pieces of broken glass he turned purple with rage.

Dashing the demijohn at Will's head, which he barely missed, he seized a small rattan cane and roared out:

"I'll pay you for stealing my money and smashing the demijohn to conceal it."

With that he made a cut at Will with the rattan, which he avoided by springing to one side.

Will was nearly sixteen years of age, and a large, stout boy.

He thought that he was too large to be whipped and did not believe that his father would punish him in that way were he alive.

He both disliked and dreaded Dornton. If there had been a chance to leave the room, he would have done so, but the enraged man was between him and the door.

The most cowardly men and animals will frequently fight desperately when cornered.

Will was no coward. He felt that he would rather die than be whipped, and, seeing no other way of avoiding it, seized the poker and stood on the defensive.

"Put that down, sir," growled Dornton, advancing on him in a threatening manner.

"I won't, without you let me alone," replied Will.

Just at this moment, Will's mother, who had heard the sound of angry words, came into the room.

She flew at her husband, and, clinging to his arm, said:

"Oh, Rufus, for mercy's sake, don't strike the boy!"

Dornton shook her off rudely, saying:

"Mind your own business, madam."

But she wound her arms around him, and, lifting her tearful face to his, began begging and entreating him to desist.

"He is not your child; don't whip him; if he has done anything wrong, I will talk to him, and he will be sorry, and not do so any more."

"Let me go," said Dornton, struggling to release himself.

"Forgive him this time; for my sake, pardon him just this one time, and he shall never offend you again," she pleaded, clinging to him.

But he was blind with passion and deaf to the voice of reason.

Finding that he could not release himself, he struck her a severe blow on the mouth, causing her lips to bleed.

Moaning as if her heart was broken, she sank upon the floor at his feet.

At the sight of this Will's blood boiled within him. Heavens and earth! To see the mother that bore him struck like a dog. It was more than he could stand.

He was beside himself with rage.

Rushing at Dornton, he struck him savagely with the poker.

Dornton had a certain amount of animal courage, but he was a brute and a coward at heart, or he never would have struck his wife.

He cowered before the blaze of indignation in the flashing eyes of the aroused boy.

He threw up his arm to ward off the blow, but received a lick upon it that made it fall powerless by his side.

He would have fled, but as he turned to do so the poker descended upon his head with such force that the iron was bent, and he fell senseless to the floor, with the blood gushing from his nose and mouth.

Mrs. Dornton, wild with terror, knelt by the insensible man.

"Fly! Oh, fly for your life!" she said to Will; "you have killed him! You will be arrested! Get out of the way; hide yourself! I will write to you through the postoffice. Go; for mercy's sake, go at once!"

With his anger still burning in his breast, Will walked off down the street with his head erect, and felt that he did not care who knew what he had done.

But in a short time he began to cool down, and he thought that he had better go away from the neighborhood of the house.

He wandered about until late in the afternoon, and then, buying a loaf of bread, he crept into an empty goods box, which sheltered him from the wind, and passed a miserable night.

In the morning he went to the postoffice and got the following letter:

"Taylor's Hotel, Jersey City.

"My Dear Son: Mr. D. was not hurt as much as we thought. When he came to himself the way he carried on was perfectly terrible. He swears that he will have you hung or kill you himself. Do keep out of his way.

"He treated me so badly that I left him last night and stayed with a friend. I am now on my way to Philadelphia, where I intend to remain with my sister.

"I have only money enough to buy my ticket, or I would send you some in this letter. As soon as I get to Philadelphia, I will write to you and enclose you enough to enable you to join me.

"Do be careful and not let Mr. D. see you, and may Heaven guard and preserve you is the prayer of

"Your heart-broken mother,
"Emma Dornton."

Will did not have enough money to afford to go to a lodging-house, and, remembering his experience of the night before, he spent the greater part of the day in looking for some place where he could spend the night with some prospect of comfort.

He finally found a little open space in one side of a pile of cotton bales on a pier not far from Wall street ferry, where he would not only be sheltered from the wind, but could stretch himself out straight when he laid down, something that he could not do in a box.

Thinking that he would be sure to receive some money the next day, he treated himself to a fif-

teen-cent beef stew, and, retiring to his resting-place, he was soon fast asleep, in spite of the cold.

Toward midnight he awakened, numbed and chilled through. The stars were shining down on him, and the only noise that struck his ear was the sighing of the wind as it swept over the river and the lapping of the water against the spiles.

He was about to get up and move about to try and warm himself up a little, when he heard footsteps approaching, and a voice saying:

"Show a light, there, Rufus; I can't see how to get along with this swag."

Not wishing to be discovered, Will sprang back as close to the cotton as he could, but the next instant a dark-lantern was flashed into the recess.

He uttered an exclamation of surprise. He was face to face with Dornton.

They recognized each other at the same instant.

With an oath, Dornton dropped the lantern, drew a large knife and sprang at Will, who, having no other means of defense, closed with his assailant, and endeavored, by locking his arms around him, to keep him from using the knife.

In this he was, in a great measure, successful though he received several slight cuts on the shoulders and back.

He shouted lustily for help.

The space they were in was so narrow that Dornton's companion could offer him no assistance.

Dornton tried his best to shove Will back, so as to get a fair blow with the knife, but Will stuck to him like a leech.

Will's shouts had been heard, and some policemen were heard approaching.

Dornton gave a desperate spring backward to loosen Will's hold, and the two fell over the end of the pier into the river.

The knife was dropped in the fall, and Will and Dornton engaged in a furious struggle, each trying to force the head of the other under water.

Luckily a police boat was near at hand, and the men, attracted by the noise, dragged the two combatants out of the water.

Dornton's companion was arrested as he was trying to escape from the pier.

He had in his possession a large lot of jewelry, which, it was found, belonged to a firm on Maiden Lane, whose establishment had been broken into during the night.

Dornton and his companion were locked up. The mysterious room in Mr. Dornton's house was opened and found to contain a large lot of disguises and burglar's tools.

The two burglars were sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

The jewelers, whose goods had been recovered, gave Will a handsome reward.

Mrs. Dornton got a divorce, and, with the experience that she has had, will not be likely to marry again.

And as for Will, he never looked or acted like a boy after his difficulty with Dornton. He is in business for himself, and doing well.

BRIEF BUT POINTED

"DECENT" FAMILY IN BUDAPEST OFFERS HALF A BED TO RENT

"Half a bed to let by decent family. Terms moderate. Inspection invited. Address Madam Andrassy, 42 Sandor Street, Budapest."

Thus read an advertisement in the newspaper *Pesti Hirlap*. In order to ascertain whether the advertisement was a joke or genuine the correspondent went to the address. After climbing six flights of stairs, he reached the flat, where a kindly looking old woman opened the door.

"Do you see?" she said. "You can have this bed from 8 P. M. until 8 A. M. the following morning. Times are so hard in Hungary that some people cannot afford to hire a room or even a bed for permanent use."

NEW MAYON CRATER TERRORIZES FILIPINOS

Belching tons of lava, the volcano Mayon early today was in the throes of its worst eruption since 1900, with a series of earth shocks rocking the countryside and spreading terror over the western portion of Albay Province.

Hours after the first molten rock shot high into the air the lava flow and earth rumblings continued. At the first sign of renewed activity natives fled and, with the disturbance continuing, the few remaining inhabitants of the little town of Libog, near the foot of the mountain, moved to safety.

There were no reports of loss at the leper settlement at Culion.

As molten rock, fire and ashes shot skyward from a new crater which opened yesterday about 500 feet from the summit, women and children paraded the streets of Legaspi, their songs and prayers for divine protection mingling with cries of alarm. When lava from the new crater hit the base of the mountain it splashed a quarter of a mile.

A vast area slowly was being covered as the lava flowed to lower levels. Considerable damage had been done in the higher country and a stream has been dried up by the hot liquid rock.

Mayon began eruptions of serious proportions in June and continued until early July, when the disturbance apparently had been ended. At that time Governor General Stimson visited the province to inspect the situation and added his assurance to that of scientists that the worst of the cycle of eruptions had passed. Thousands of natives who had fled at the first rumbling then gradually filtered back to their homes.

BREED OF BRIARD DOGS DISCOVERED BY DOUGHBOYS

Out of the 2,000,000 doughboys who got to France during the recent war there were two or

three whose knowledge of the French language may have been limited to "Oui," but whose knowledge of dogs was infinite. These two or three (and two or three is said advisedly, because it is not certain whether there were two or three) were stationed for some reason or other in Brie, a little district in France to the east of Paris, centering around Meaux.

Brie was war-ridden country, but these two or three doughboys were thinking less of the war to end war than they were of knowing a good dog when they saw it. That may be lamentable, but it remains a fact. After the war was over they went to no end of trouble to circumvent the military red tape, and they brought back with them their faithful dogs.

There was nothing sentimental about it. A good dog is a good dog. Little did the possessors realize that the animals to which they became attached and dependent upon would a few years later be recognized in the official stud book or that a society would be formed to propagate them.

Yet that is exactly what has happened. The information was recently contained in the official publication of the American Kennel Club with no comment, just a mere announcement.

The dog in question is the Briard—Berger de la Brie. There are only ten of them in the United States. It is possible that in time the style in dogs will make the breed as popular as the German police dog.

The Briard may be described as a cross between the old English sheepdog and an Irish wolfhound. He is taller than the sheepdog and has a long, coarse outer coat with a denser one underneath. His ears are erect and his tail plumed. The hind legs are double dew-clawed, a distinctive mark. His stern, sloping head denotes speed and power. The Briard can herd sheep or cattle, take care of children and drag a cart.

However, that is not the story of how the Briard got into the stud book. He got there because Wallace MacMonnies, an American dog fancier, found out about him and went to France to get specimens. He spent months and got mostly the cold shoulder. Brie may be war devastated and the populace may be having a hard time, but they would not give up their dogs.

The answer always was that there are no true Briards left. Mr. MacMonnies was not daunted by this answer nor by the answer that with the great progenitor, Jarnac, dead, the breed had gone to seed. He persisted, and as a result he obtained two dogs and now has a litter of pups and, furthermore, the recognition of the stud book.

Meanwhile there are two or three doughboys in this country who have Briards, one of which may be the descendant of the lamented Jarnac. And there is a society which is called *Les Amis des Briard*, with MacMonnies, Miss Frances Hopping and Harold Over as officers.

CURRENT NEWS

PARIS FUNERAL SERVICE RAISES COST OF DYING

France's high cost of living now is paralleled by the high cost of dying, according to the Municipal Funeral Service, which announces a deficit of 5,533,000 francs in 1927, and the early part of 1928. Present charges are declared far insufficient to meet the costs of material and labor.

Ordinary coffins have tripled in price. The Service proposes to standardize coffin prices and to replace the horse-drawn hearse with motor vehicles.

MYSTIC'S BLINDFOLDED DRIVE CALLED MENACE

R. Emmet Digney, attorney, and former President of the Board of Education, called on Mayor Frederick C. McLaughlin recently to make an official investigation of a speedy drive which Koran, a mystic playing at a theater here, took blindfolded through the business district of the city.

Mr. Digney said that the mystic exceeded forty miles an hour at times, and permitting him to drive at a speed blindfolded constituted culpable official negligence.

HOOVER PICTURE SELECTED FOR HOMES BY MRS. HERT

The official Herbert Hoover picture which Republican women plan to place in homes throughout the country as during the war days when he served as food administrator has been selected by Mrs. Alvin T. Hert, a vice-chairman of the Republican National Committee. The photograph is one which was posed for by Mr. Hoover this year about the time he entered the Presidential race. Copies will be distributed throughout the nation.

STAMFORD TO RETURN CONFEDERATE TROPHIES

A Stamford delegation will appear in Richmond, Va., the one-time capital of the Confederacy, on August 17 and turn back relics which Connecticut soldiers of '65 appropriated.

A strip of the Stars and Bars which floated over the Confederate Capitol and a piece of brass ornament from the arch over President Jefferson Davis's chair will be presented to Governor Harry Byrd in the Virginia House of Delegates. The local delegation will be headed by Commander William P. Patrick, of the G. A. R., and Mayor Alfred N. Phillips, Jr.

GERMAN HOPES TO MAKE GOOD FOODS FROM WOOD

A procedure to convert wood fiber into food stuffs, or digestible heat and energy producing carbohydrates such as sugar, starch or flour, was described at the recent chemical congress in Dresden by Professor Friedrich Bergius, of Heidelberg, originator of the method for liquefying coal.

Chemically this procedure is based on the Will-

staetter theory of hydrogenizing wood by means of highly concentrated hydrochloric acid, but further elaborated by a special process for re-extracting the hydrochloric acid without destroying the carbohydrate through the continuous subjection to heat.

This procedure is believed to promise advantages, especially for the mass production of fodder.

LINER AND COLLIER COLLIDE AT NIGHT IN ST. LAWRENCE

An ocean liner filled with passengers and a gigantic coastal collier collided head on in the St. Lawrence recently. Both craft suffered serious damages, but it was believed that there was no loss of life.

The collision occurred before dawn at Sorel, thirty-five miles down river, between the incoming Canadian Pacific steamship Montrose and the outbound Rose Castle, one of the largest colliers on the river.

The collier had to be beached when it started taking water so rapidly that the engine room flooded. The liner continued here and docked with a twisted and buckled stempiece, and the plates of her port bow torn as if ripped through by a huge knife.

There were no casualties on the Montrose, but there were no definite reports to the welfare of the Rose Castle's crew.

The boats came together as the Rose Castle was dropping down the river in ballast to Sydney, N. S., and the Montrose was approaching Montreal from Liverpool via Quebec.

RECORD GLOBE CIRCLERS WELCOMED AT CITY HALL

C. B. D. Collyer and John Henry Mears, who established a record by circling the globe in twenty-three days with the help of an airplane, called at the City Hall recently with their Sealyham terrier, Tail Wind.

They were received by Joseph V. McKee, acting Mayor, who congratulated them upon their exploit and spent some time talking with them, during which the adventurers related some of the incidents of their trip around the world. The callers were photographed in the reception room and on the steps of the City Hall.

The two world travelers were the guests at a dinner in their honor at the Harvard Club arranged by leaders in the aeronautical industry. Mears and Collyer gave complete accounts of their trip around the world, praising the performance of their folding wing Fairchild monoplane and the Pratt & Whitney motor which powered it.

"It is impossible to overlook the fact," said Collyer, "that one of the most difficult stretches of country to fly in the world is our Alleghenies. Coming around the world to this barrier I am impressed anew with the need for some method of marking the hazards which exist for the pilot attempting so near at hand."

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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